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# FAITH AND FREEDOM

BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE

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\* Allen Wardwell.

1881

(Brooke)

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# FAITH AND FREEDOM.

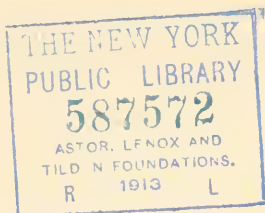
BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.



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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	v-xxiii
II. FAITH, . . . . .	1
III. GOD IS SPIRIT. I., . . . . .	15
IV. GOD IS SPIRIT. II., . . . . .	30
V. THE CHILDHOOD OF GOD, . . . . .	45
VI. THE LIGHT OF GOD IN MAN, . . . . .	59
VII. THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST, . . . . .	74
VIII. THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRIST, . . . . .	89
IX. THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND. I., . . . . .	102
X. THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND. II., . . . . .	117
XI. THE CHANGED ASPECT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, . . . . .	130
XII. BIBLICAL CRITICISM, . . . . .	148
XIII. THE ATONEMENT, . . . . .	166
XIV. DEVOTION TO THE CONVENTIONAL, . . . . .	185
XV. THE RELIGION OF SIGNS, . . . . .	200
XVI. THE NATURALNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS, . . . . .	214
XVII. LIBERTY, . . . . .	227
XVIII. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL AND GOD, . . . . .	244
XIX. IMMORTALITY. I., . . . . .	258
XX. IMMORTALITY. II., . . . . .	272
XXI. IMMORTALITY. III., . . . . .	290
XXII. IMMORTALITY. IV., . . . . .	303
XXIII. LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION OF BEDFORD CHAPEL, . . . . .	327
XXIV. SALT WITHOUT SAVOR, . . . . .	331



## INTRODUCTION.

STOPFORD BROOKE \* is the greatest preacher that the Church of England has had since Robertson of Brighton; and his withdrawal from the Church is, in many respects, the most significant recent occurrence in the English religious world. The deep interest which his new movement has awakened in America, where, both as a religious thinker and a man of letters, he has almost as many admirers as in England itself, has induced the publisher to present this collection of his sermons, selected chiefly from his later volumes, with a view to exhibit his general doctrinal position and the prominent characteristics of his preaching. His recent withdrawal from the Church and assumption of an independent position are not to be regarded as involving any very recent radical change in these. His teach-

\* Stopford Augustus Brooke was born at Dublin in 1832, and was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he gained the Downe prize and the Vice-Chancellor's prize for English verse. He graduated B.A. in 1856, and M.A. in 1858. He was curate of St. Matthew's Marylebone, 1857-59; Curate of Kensington, 1860-63; chaplain to the British Embassy at Berlin, 1863-65; minister of St. James' Chapel, 1866-75; and became minister of Bedford Chapel in June, 1876. He was appointed a chaplain in ordinary to the Queen in 1872. Mr. Brooke's published works are as follows: *Life and Letters of Frederick W. Robertson*; *Sermons*, First and Second Series; *Freedom in the Church of England*; *Christ in Modern Life*; *The Fight of Faith*; *Theology in the English Poets*; *A Primer of English Literature*; *The Life and Works of Milton*; and the *Life and Work of Maurice*, a Memorial Sermon.

The dates of the several sermons in this volume have been given, as affording some sort of index to Mr. Brooke's doctrinal development, and as explaining, in some instances, words which he would not use to-day. It is to be hoped that the important series of doctrinal sermons which Mr. Brooke has been preaching since his withdrawal from the Church may soon be given to the public.

ing to-day is essentially the same as that of five years ago. The primary significance of his new movement lies in the recognition of the inconsistency of these religious views — views long entertained with greater or less distinctness, and shared essentially by all the great Broad Church leaders — with his position as a clergyman of the Church of England.

It was as the biographer of Robertson that Stopford Brooke first became known to the general public. His *Life of Robertson*, one of the most admirable works of its kind in the language, exhibited him as a firm and independent thinker, already well emancipated from conventionalism, and impatient of much in the Church's system, an enthusiastic admirer of the great Brighton preacher as a man, and in hearty sympathy with his teachings. "As a clergyman," he said in one place, "Robertson brought distinctly forward the duty of fearlessness in speaking. He was not one who held what are called liberal opinions in the study, but would not bring them into the pulpit. He did not waver between truth to himself and success in the world. He was offered advancement in the Church, if he would abate the strength of his expressions with regard to the Sabbath. He refused the proffer with sternness. Far beyond all the other perils which beset the Church was, he thought, this peril: that men who were set apart to speak the truth, and to live above the world, should prefer ease and worldly honor to conscience, and substitute conventional opinions for eternal truths." "That men," he said again, "should, within the necessary limits, follow out their own character, and refuse to submit themselves to the common mould, is the foremost need of the age in which we live; and, if the lesson which Robertson's life teaches in this respect can be received by his brethren, he will neither have acted nor taught in vain. Robertson was himself, and not a fortuitous concurrence of other men. He possessed a true individuality, and retained the freedom of action and the diversity of feeling which men, not only in the Church, but in every profession and business, so miserably lose, when they dress their minds in the fashion of current opinion,

and look at the world, at Nature, and at God, through the glass which custom so assiduously smokes." Brooke was already at this time thoroughly alive to the difficulty of maintaining true individuality under a system like that of the Church of England. "The great disadvantage," he said, "of a Church like ours,—with fixed traditions, with a fixed system of operation, with a theological education which is exceedingly conservative, with a manner of looking at general subjects from a fixed clerical point of view, with a bias to shelter and encourage certain definite modes of thinking,—is that under its government clergymen tend to become all of one pattern."

Mr. Brooke's first volume of sermons, published in 1868, showed still more plainly than the *Life of Robertson* that he did not belong to the ordinary London pattern, and that he was able, in spite of the Church's system, to maintain his individuality and to speak fearlessly. Four sermons from this earliest volume of Mr. Brooke are included in the present collection,—the sermons upon "The Naturalness of God's Judgments," "The Intellectual Development of Christ," "Devotion to the Conventional," and "The Religion of Signs"; and these sermons, while by no means showing the maturity and depth of thought which we find in the more important parts of *Christ in Modern Life*,\* and in the sermons of to-day, show the same freshness of feeling, the same unbackneyed method, and the same general intellectual tendencies. The volume at once established Mr. Brooke's reputation as an original and independent thinker, and he became from that time a real power in London.

Mr. Brooke's second volume, *Freedom in the Church of England*, appeared in 1871, and consisted of a series of sermons suggested by the famous Voysey Judgment. The trial of Mr. Voysey involved a discussion of the whole Broad Church position, and the object of Mr. Brooke's work was to determine the nature and extent of the Church's comprehension. The

\* The sermons in the present collection upon "The Fitness of Christianity for Mankind" and "Immortality" are taken from *Christ in Modern Life*.

volume contained sermons upon such questions of controversy as Original Sin, the Atonement, and Biblical Criticism,—the sermons in the present collection upon the two latter subjects come from this volume,—and it is especially interesting as showing how radical a man may be and yet find means to reconcile his views with doctrinal standards like those of the Church of England, or at any rate to justify to himself his continuance within the Church. There is, perhaps, no better popular defence of the Broad Church position, and how inadequate a defence this is Mr. Brooke would now be quick enough to admit. It is to be remembered, however, that, while this volume showed Mr. Brooke to be more or less at variance with the Church's doctrines upon almost every point which he discussed, he had not at this time given up the belief in miracles, which he afterward did, and which was the decisive cause of his final withdrawal from the Church. This volume of ten years ago is not therefore to be regarded altogether as the defence of one holding the views for which Mr. Brooke now stands, although it does oppose and deny beliefs which are as unreservedly demanded by the Church, if they are not as fundamental to its constitution, as the belief in miracle itself.

The radical views which Mr. Brooke felt called upon to assert with the greater emphasis, as the *Voysey Judgment* seemed in some respects to curtail that degree of liberty which had already been allowed in the Church, were expressed at the same time with studied temperance, and respect for opposing opinions. "I trust," he said, "that all will recognize in these sermons the deep desire I possess that in the midst of these manifold differences of opinion, the existence of which I cherish as a means of arriving at truth, we may not lose our liberty through fear, nor our reverence for truth through recklessness of opinion on the one side, or through a blind devotion to transient forms of thought upon the other." He proceeded to define his conception of a National Church, maintaining that a National Church was impossible and not national at all unless it permitted within its actual boundaries every phase of



religious thought possible to Englishmen, within certain limits which demand belief in a few cardinal doctrines,—doctrines as general as in the State the articles, for instance, of the Bill of Rights. In a word, the National Church must tolerate and comprehend, on an equal footing, religious views as various and conflicting as the political views represented in Parliament, being, in its sphere, as true a miniature as Parliament of the national life. The creeds and articles of the Church must be viewed, like the Acts of Parliament, as entirely provisional and fluctuating in their nature, merely regulative and always subject to revision; and opposition to them must no more be construed as disloyalty than attempts to reform legislation. Would the Church allow this freedom? If not, it was not a National Church, and its disestablishment was doomed. Mr. Brooke then proceeded to show what some of the changes were which criticism and science had made necessary in theology, and to defend the views upon the principal questions of controversy for which his party demanded tolerance and recognition. If such views could not be recognized by the Church, then there was but one course for the liberal clergy. “They cannot,” said Mr. Brooke, “in the interests of truth, abide with her whose features are no longer those of a mother.” “And if they leave,” he said to his people, “and you agree with their love of liberty, your place is also no longer in the Church. Truth should be as dear to you as it is to your ministers. The liberal clergy ought to feel that they have the support of liberally-minded men in their effort to keep the Church open and on a level with the knowledge of the day.” For ten years longer, Mr. Brooke kept up the losing fight. Now, he has come to see clearly that his theory of a National Church, fine as it may be in itself, is not the theory upon which the Church of England really works, and that he only stultified himself by continuing to act as though it were.

But the pulpit of St. James’ Chapel was no more conspicuous for its liberal theology than for its innovations upon the ordinary range of pulpit themes and pulpit methods. Perhaps the

primary endeavor of Stopford Brooke's preaching, throughout his whole ministerial career, has been to clear religious life and thought of a false traditionalism, to oppose the tendency to localize and pigeon-hole religion, looking upon it as a special department of life, and concerned with a particular history and particular institutions, instead of embracing all history and being the informing spirit of all life and all the true elements of society. *Christ in Modern Life* is the fitting title of his principal volume of sermons. He would make

"Our common daily life divine,  
And every land a Palestine."

He would bring religion to bear upon every department of life and thought, and bring every department of thought into the service of religion; would "claim, as belonging to the province of the Christian ministry, political, historical, scientific, and artistic work in their connection with theology," and "rub out the sharp lines drawn by that false distinction of sacred and profane."\* Every sphere of man's thought and action, he said, is in idea, and ought to be in fact, a channel through which God thinks and acts; and so there is no subject which does not in the end run up into theology, and may not in the end be made religious. A proper recognition of this, he believed, would bring about important changes in the methods and the function of the Church, and greatly increase its usefulness; and it was in accordance with this that he instituted, at St. James' Chapel, courses of Sunday afternoon lectures, which should

\* When the Shakspeare Memorial was dedicated at Stratford-on-Avon, two years ago, it was Mr Brooke who was invited to go down and preach the sermon appropriate to the occasion from the pulpit of the old Stratford church. "I support with pleasure," he said, "any movement which brings Shakspeare more on the stage in this country. And, when I say that, I mean to support all dramatic performances which represent human action and emotion with truth, which tell or strive to tell the real tale of human life. The stage ought to be one of the best means of education in a State; and it might be much more so than it is in England, if the foolish and sometimes odious stigma laid upon it by religious persons were frankly removed, and a cultivated demand made for the production of admirable plays."

avoid as much as possible the form of sermons, but have some direct bearing on religious thought and the conduct of life. He invited well-known and competent men to speak upon such subjects as "The Inner Life of the Romish Church" and "The Relation of Music to Religion"; and he himself gave the admirable lectures upon Cowper, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Burns, which have since been published under the title of *Theology in the English Poets*.\* The experiment was very successful. It was much criticised, as was to be expected; "but the blame of many accustomed to hear nothing but sermons from the pulpit," said Mr. Brooke, "has been wholly outweighed in my mind by the fact of the attendance of many persons who were before uninterested in religious subjects at all." He believed that much good might be done, if similar efforts became general. "It would give variety to clerical work; and much knowledge that now remains only as latent force among the clergy might be made dynamic, if I may borrow a term from science. If rectors of large churches would ask clergymen who know any subject of the day well to lecture on its religious aspect in the afternoon, they would please themselves, enlighten their congregations, and fill their churches. And they would assist the cause of religion among that large number of persons who do not go to Church, and who think that Christianity has nothing to do with politics, art, literature, or science."

It would have been impossible for Mr. Brooke to have chosen a theme better combining those things which he is best qualified to treat than that of *Theology in the English Poets*. First a religious thinker, he is next a literary critic; and his various essays upon English Literature and its great masters have not been surpassed in their good proportions, their just estimates, and fine appreciation of inner purpose, by anything written in our time. His little *Primer of English Literature* is a very miracle of a book, reconciling compression with

\* A second course, on Blake, Shelley, Keats, and Byron, was subsequently delivered; but this series has not yet been published. It is to be hoped that the larger public may not much longer be kept from the enjoyment of it.

living and breathing in a way almost never done before, and managing in its hundred and fifty pages to set Cædmon and Chaucer and Elizabeth's time and Anne's before us with a freshness and vividness that the big compendiums have scarcely ever dreamed of. Quite equal, in its way, is Mr. Brooke's larger work—still a very small work—upon Milton. It reveals the profoundest and most sympathetic study of Milton, and the completest understanding of the Puritan movement and the Puritan mind, with which Mr. Brooke himself really has so much in common. He is equally at home in every province and period of English literature and English history; and Mr. Green, the author of the *History of the English People*, has publicly acknowledged the obligations which he is under to him for assistance in the preparation of that great work.

“The poets of England ever since Cowper,” says Mr. Brooke, “have been more and more theological, till we reach such men as Tennyson or Browning, whose poetry is overcrowded with theology.” The study of the theology of the poets is especially delightful and helpful, because their theology is the natural growth of their own hearts, free from the claims of dogma and independent of conventional religious thought. In their ordinary life, indeed, the poets were subject to the same influences as other men. They may have held a distinct creed or conformed to a special sect, or they may have expressed the strongest denial of theological opinions; but in their poetry their imagination was freed, and they spoke truths which were true because they were felt. “And the fact is that in this realm of emotion, where prejudice dies, the thoughts and feelings of their poetry on the subject of God and Man are often wholly different from those expressed in their every-day life. Cowper's theology in his poetry soars beyond the narrow sect to which he belonged into an infinitely wider universe. Shelley's atheism, when the fire of emotion or imagination is burning in him, and when he is floating on his wings he knows not whither, becomes pantheism, and his hatred of Christianity is lost in enthusiastic but unconscious statement of Christian conceptions.”

Of the sixteen lectures which make up this volume upon *Theology in the English Poets*, nine are devoted to Wordsworth, who holds as high a place with Mr. Brooke as he held with Robertson before him. "In coming to Wordsworth," he says, "we come to the greatest of the English poets of this century, greatest not only as a poet, but as a philosopher. It is the mingling of profound thought and of ordered thought with poetic sensibility and power (the power always the master of the sensibility) which places him in this high position. He does possess a philosophy, and its range is wide as the universe. He sings of God, of Man, of Nature, and, as the result of these three, of Human Life; and they are all linked by thought and through feeling one to another, so that the result is a complete whole." From what Mr. Brooke has to say of Wordsworth's poetry of Nature, I quote a single passage, because it is so good an expression of the philosophy which underlies so much in his own preaching. Wordsworth he says "speaks of

'The Being that is in the clouds and air,  
That is in the green leaves among the groves,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.'

This Being, observe, is more than a mere influence. It is a conscious life, which realizes itself as a personality in realizing itself within the sum of all things. In fact, this Being, who is the life of the universe, is the all-moving Spirit of God, the soul which is the eternity of Thought in Nature.\* It may be

\* "A few lines in the 'Prelude' express this clearly :—

'Hitherto,  
In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked  
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven,  
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man  
Established by the Sovereign Intellect,  
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,  
As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,  
A deathless spirit.'

the fashion to call this pantheistic; but it is the true and necessary pantheism which affirms God in all, and all by him, but which does not affirm that this All includes the whole of God. Wordsworth's feeling of personality was so strong that he would probably have said that the personality of God in reference to Nature consisted in God's consciousness of himself at every moment of time, in every part as well as in the whole of the universe. But, as this is a metaphysical and not a poetic thought, and as Wordsworth wanted a thought which he could use poetically, he transferred this idea of God realizing his personality in the whole of the universe to an actual person, whom he creates, to a Being whom he terms Nature. And hence there grew up in his mind the thought of one personal, spiritual Life, which had infinitely subdivided itself through all the forms of the outward world, which could realize an undivided life at any moment, but which also lived a distinct life in every part. It became possible then for him to have communication with any one manifestation of that Life, in a tree or a rock or a cloud, to separate in thought the characteristics of any one form of it from another, or, omitting the consideration of the parts, to think of or communicate with the whole, to realize the one spiritual life that conditioned itself in all as a Person with whom he could speak, and from whom he could receive impulse or warning or affection. And, when this was done, when Nature seemed one Life, then the necessary spirituality of the thought made him lose consciousness of the material forms under which this Life appeared, and that condition of mind arose in which Nature was unsubstantialized in thought."

It is chiefly English thought, English poetry and history, of which Mr. Brooke has written; and it is from English masters that his culture has apparently been most immediately derived. And yet his philosophy is essentially the German philosophy; and those very elements in Wordsworth with which his mind has so strong an affinity are the elements which Wordsworth owed chiefly to German influences, or which, at least, are of the distinctively German character. Stopford Brooke is a Tran-

scendentalist, whose English feet are set very firmly on the ground, combining a lofty Idealism with shrewd good sense, in something the same manner which we see in Emerson. All of the great Broad Churchmen have been deeply influenced by the German thinkers. Robertson, it will be remembered, was the English translator of Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*. Just what the direction of Mr. Brooke's studies was during his Berlin days we do not know, but the influence of the great Germans is conspicuous through all his later work. Of the philosophers proper, Fichte affected him most; and he has expressly acknowledged his obligations to him. "There is within Fichte's philosophy," he says, "teaching both on life, morality, and religion, which makes him more worth the reading of persons troubled by the great spiritual questions than any other of the German philosophers."

Stopford Brooke is first and foremost a Christian, more purely and strictly and emphatically a Christian than almost any other great religious teacher of our time. The ideas which Christ first made clearly manifest he believes to be capable of endless expansion, and to be the ideas most necessary for the salvation and elevation of humanity. "If we look long and earnestly enough," he says, "we shall find in them (not read into them, as some say) the explanation and solution, not only of our religious, but even of our political and social problems." "I believe, and rest all I say upon the truth, as I think, that in Christ was Life, and that this Life, in the thoughts and acts which flowed from it, was and is and always will be the Light of the race of Man."

The name of Christ is connected with two religions or systems of thought,—the one the teaching of Christ himself and the religion which every man may have in common with him, the other a scheme of thought *about* Christ and a religion which assumes that he was something other than man, and worships him. Lessing used to distinguish the two, for lack of exact terms, as "The Religion of Christ" and "The Christian Relig-

ion." It is the "Religion of Christ" for which Stopford Brooke stands; and it is to this, of course, that the terms Christian and Christianity, in a strict and scientific sense, belong. Only the great prestige and power of the opposing system have made possible the miserable controversy which has been waged upon this point, and which mere reference to our general usage at once makes an end of. Platonism is not a theory about Plato. The true Platonist is he who accepts the philosopher's cardinal principles as cardinal in the constitution of his own thought. He is not to be tested by what was accidental in the philosopher's opinion, or merely incidental to the general conditions of his culture,—*e.g.*, the cosmogony of the *Phædon*,—but only by the essential principles of his philosophy; and, in determining what the philosopher himself was, he is only bound not to be inconsistent with these principles. He may not hold, for instance, that Plato himself was simply a fortuitous concurrence of atoms; for this were opposed to the first principle of the Platonic philosophy. And the true Christian may not deny Christ's oneness with God; for the oneness of humanity, in its idea and essence, with the divine, the fact that God is our Father, that we are the offspring of God, "begotten, not made," was the first principle of Christ's philosophy and of his consciousness. So much it is indeed necessary for the true Christian to hold *about* Christ, in order to consistency with the fundamental principle of Christ's religion,—that he was one with God.

But this oneness with God is not something peculiar to Christ alone, however superior his consciousness of it may have been, however transcendent the power with which he illustrated and enforced the truth in his life and teaching, and however unique his position as the great mediator of the truth to the race. Christ is simply the first-born among many brethren, realizing what is true in essence of every man, and what every man may realize,—lighted by the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Mr. Brooke has brought out this point very strongly in the sermon upon "The Light of God



in Man," included in the present volume, and in the sermons upon "The Central Truth of Christianity," in *Christ in Modern Life*. The central truth of Christianity and the distinctive doctrine of Christianity is to him the doctrine of a divine humanity. The first important doctrinal sermon which he preached after his withdrawal from the Church was upon the Incarnation. "The whole truth," he said, "contained in the doctrine of the Incarnation is becoming less and less a spiritual power in the minds of men, because of the miracles which the Church has connected with it. The Orthodox lose, in the prominence they give to the miracles, much of the spiritual power of the doctrine, and certainly the greater part of its universality. Unless the doctrine be freed from the miracle, now linked to it, it will, as the belief in miracle dies out, die out itself, or lose its power. It will, of course, rise again; for humanity cannot get on without faith in God's incarnation in man. It is at the very root and is the life-blood of all religion; but its real foundation is deeper than miracle, and it will rest only the more firmly when the belief in miracle has perished. The spirit within man which thirsts after relationship with God does not need the miracle. The truth of God's union with man is clear to us without it,—clear and more comforting and infinitely more universal. If God be the Father of men, as Christ declared, then it is absolutely natural that he should enter into men and abide with them and in them, and through them reveal himself to other men. Of this continual incarnation, Christ is the highest and the purest example, unique as yet upon earth. But from the very beginning, in the first breath that man drew as an intelligent spirit in this world, God has been incarnating himself in man. This truth has been found in all religions. It forms now the foremost truth of Christianity. 'God and man are one,' said Christ. 'The Father lives in me, speaks in me, works in me. I am nothing save by union with him.' He spoke that, not in a character inherently unlike ours, but in the name and in the voice of humanity, to which he belonged. What he was then, we are to

be. It is the normal end of human nature to be the dwelling-place of God, to be interwoven with divinity, to have itself taken into God, and God incarnate in it."

This religion of Christ, viewing man under the forms of eternity, and giving him the immortality of God, invests his nature and his destiny with a dignity and a grandeur which nothing else can do, thereby imposing duties and responsibilities as nothing else can do, and thus having a power and a fitness for mankind which are universal and eternal.\* Mr. Brooke opposes the ideas of Christ to the ideas of Comte, to Secularism and whatever attempts to do the work of religion in the world to-day, not as excluding them, or as antagonistic to their real motives, but as genuinely including these as factors in itself. Of Comte's "Religion of Humanity," he says, "I am unable to see how it differs, so far as it asserts a principle, from the great Christian idea. Everything it says about Humanity and our duties to Humanity seems to me to be implicitly contained in Christ's teaching, and to be no more than an expansion of the original Christian idea of a divine Man in whom all the race is contained, and who is ideally the race." Mr. Brooke does not join in the cry which has been raised against the religion of Positivism, but commends its careful study, and recognizes the force with which it has brought home to us many great conceptions which the false system of the Church had brought us into danger of forgetting. It would be untrue in a Christian teacher, he says, to abuse a system which has so strongly emphasized the duty of self-sacrifice among men and among nations; "but it would be equally untrue," he continues, "if I did not say that the refusal to consider the existence of a personal God and the immortality of man will, in the end, make that religion die of starvation."

"Historical Christianity," says Emerson, "has dwelt with

\* "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" is a command valid only just as it is an assurance that our own nature is divine. So far as that is true, are our obligations infinite. Goethe said, "If we would improve a man, it were well to let him believe that we already think him that which we would have him to be."

noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus."\* And this is true, if he means by it, as he does, that which was accidental and particular about the person of Jesus, as opposed to the essential truth with which his inner, real personality was identified. In the sense intended, it is true, as he says, that the soul knows no persons. But all this is true only to him who is able to see its truth rightly, and that is in seeing also the significance of that personal element, which is so essential in religion and in that whole department of life into which the emotions enter,—in everything, almost, beyond abstract metaphysics. Goethe has taught us that the secret of good art lies in the recognition of proper limitations, in clearly fixing bounds, and not attempting too much. And a similar principle of limitation governs much in the emotional life, and cannot be ignored without disaster. We cannot love John Smith's mother as we love our own, even if we admit with our whole head that she is as true a woman; and we feel toward him who has taught us truth or done us good as we cannot feel toward the mediator of equal good to others. Few of us can be stirred by the story of Morgarten or Marston Moor as by the story of Lexington or Gettysburg, although we may be quick to allow that the Swiss patriots and the Puritans were as heroic and as right as our own fathers and brothers. This principle of limitation, truly apprehended and operating naturally, does not narrow, but expands the circle of our interests and

\* We are reminded of the lines which Lessing puts into the Mahometan Sittah's mouth, in his *Nathan*:—

“You do not know, you will not know the Christians,  
 Christianity, not manhood, is their pride,  
 E'en that which, from their founder down, hath spiced  
 Their superstition with humanity,  
 'Tis not for its humanity they love it,  
 No; but because Christ taught, Christ practised it.  
 Happy for them he was so good a man!  
 Happy for them that they can trust his virtue!  
 His virtue? Not his virtue, but his name,  
 They say, shall spread abroad, and shall devour  
 And put to shame the names of all good men.  
 The name, the name, is all their pride.”

our affections,—by which I mean that he who feels intensely the good and true nearest him is only helped by the strong feeling to a genuine interest in things more remote and more comprehensive. New England, perhaps, of all parts of our American Union, has ever been most jealous for State rights, yet she has been the stoutest assertor of national sovereignty; and the great international men who have risen up everywhere since Kant wrote his *Eternal Peace*—Cobden, Mazzini, Sumner—have all been men conspicuous for their fine love of country and of race. The “cosmopolitan” of the *Boulevard des Italiens* is not the international man,—really not a man at all. In general, finally, be it said that, while it is true enough that truth is universal, always and everywhere truth, it is also true that *persons* alone are the depositaries and mediators of truth. Left to ourselves, knowing no persons, we should have a very inconsiderable stock of “universal truths.” And the words and work of every great master get no adequate interpretation save through our knowledge of the master’s self. To refer to Goethe again, by way of illustration,—who knows *Tasso* or *Faust* or *Wilhelm Meister*, who does not first know Goethe?

The relation of all this to religion and to Stopford Brooke’s preaching of Christianity is plain enough. If Christianity were no better abstractly than other religions, but only one of many equals, it is the religion identified with the stream of civilization to which we belong, the mother of us all; and the truths which it utters speak to our hearts with an eloquence and force that no strange lips could give them. For the great masses of men, who rise to abstract ideas slowly, this objectifying of the truth and connecting it with persons is as necessary as the appeal to Lexington instead of Morgarten is expedient and proper. For whom of us, indeed, is this not necessary or helpful? It is well for a race to have its Bible and to have its Christ, and to take them into its heart, even at the expense of much prejudice and superstition, and even though there were Bibles many and Christs many, of equal rank. The power of common traditions

and associations, of allusions and appeals understood from the top to the bottom of society, of a religious poetry and prophecy and story which speak to all alike, is a wholesome and an inspiring power. It is a power which can be sustained only by properly respecting the principle of limitation, whose operation reaches to every sphere of life; and the man of culture must often find that, through some disproportion in his development, the intensity of the feeling which he used to have for this good or that has not freely or satisfyingly transferred itself to the many goods and many truths which his broadening knowledge masters. It is a question whether the man is to be envied who listens with equal emotion to the Psalms of David and those Vedic Hymns which sing the same truths, or who lumps the apothegms of Confucius and the Sermon on the Mount, any more than the American is to be envied to whom Boston Common and the Mississippi mean no more than the Yang-tse-Kiang and the gardens of Bombay. And it is a question whether the religious teacher to whom all particular religions may have come to have equal value would not do well to illustrate and enforce his teaching primarily through that religion which lies nearest to the hearts of the people, so the religion in itself be good and true.

But this would be at best but temporary and a makeshift. The Bible once really ranked with the Vedas and the Koran, and Christ viewed as not inherently superior to Confucius, and Christianity as a religion would decay, or rather be subsumed under something larger. The *patronage* of the cultured teacher and his consideration for the necessities or weaknesses of the masses would not long count for much; and, large as the commendable element in it might be, it would have from the start, like all patronage, a certain taint of insincerity. Mr. Karl Hillebrand, whose recognition of the important functions of the principle of limitation is so strong, in the midst of his own large culture, as to lead him to put in a word even in behalf of *prejudices*,—"good, solid prejudices," he calls them,—shows how the German patriotism of the last dozen years has had

little robust vigor, because it was not born naturally, but was the fruit of reflection, and is conscious and intentional. "It has a tincture of pedantry," he says, "because it has been made by scholars and literary men. It has sprung up from a feeling of *want* of patriotism, and resembles the religion of the German romanticists, who had all been free-thinkers, and resolved one fine day to become believers, because belief was a necessary basis of all poetical excellence."

Stopford Brooke's Christianity is not of this manufactured or prudent sort. Here is a genuine man, a man who thinks and is no Athanasian parrot, whose religion is no indifferent eclecticism, but who does believe with all his heart that Christ stands so far above other masters that he stands alone; that his religion, like Homer's poetry, and in a sense far deeper, is as fresh to-day as at the beginning; and that in the spread of his spirit and the appropriation of his ideas in their true purport, the liberal application of his mind to the shifting conditions of society, lie the surest progress, the highest happiness, and the best hope of mankind. It is no thing of names with him. He will call Christian Christian only as he calls Homer Homer,—simply insisting that the greatest of all masters shall not be precisely the one to whom men may refuse to pay the grateful tribute which the Kantian or the Wesleyan pays to his secondary master naturally and unchallenged. But the truth, not the name, is the thing with Stopford Brooke. Quick to recognize the good in every system of thought and every ideal of life, he criticises them only when and in so far as they would drive out or obscure what seem to him the larger truth and better life. The largest truth and the best life seem to him the truth which Christ taught and the life Christ lived. He would not deny the abstract possibility of the coming of a teacher who should teach Christ's truth in a still loftier form than Christ taught it; the truth itself,—that man is one with God,—than this there cannot be any loftier truth. He would not deny that one might come whose life should be as true as Christ's to the divine Idea, and be, perchance, in some sort, a larger life; but

he would say that speculation on the point were altogether vain and profitless, a waste of time. If that teacher and that life come, if indeed the forms of Christ's teaching grow obsolete, it will be only as the "Santa Maria" has grown obsolete, which still carried Columbus; and it would still be true that the coming of Christ is, as Carlyle has said so strongly, "the most important event that has occurred or can occur in the annals of mankind." Christ's words, however, have not yet grown obsolete. They are the freshest things, to-day, in this old world; the fullest of life and of power. Surely, no work is nobler than a work like Stopford Brooke's, of so bringing the ideas and ideals of Christ, freed from the superstitions of the Church system,— "immaculate conception," *post mortem* materialization, and what not,—which, at some stage or other in the process, protective doubtless and sustaining, now only hide and choke and falsify,—so bringing them to bear upon our modern life as to turn the world, the flesh and the devil of us, the *ennui* and cynicism and greed and calculation, to shame and honest work, to reverence and vision, compassion and a rational socialism.

E. D. M.





## F A I T H.

1870.

“And the disciples said unto him, Lord, increase our faith.”—  
LUKE xvii., 5.

EVERY one has said how unintelligible the world is, and how heavy and weary is the burden of this unintelligibility. But its weariness and its weight are the spurs of our curiosity, and our curiosity is the parent of our activity. Were not the world unintelligible, we should not have been intelligent. It is the ceaseless array of physical problems, needing solution, which has trained the scientific intellect of mankind. It is the ceaseless array of mental and moral problems which has developed the thoughtfulness of the race. It is the ceaseless array of problems about God and his relation to mankind which has trained the spiritual life of men; and it is these last that come more home to us than all the others. We hand over the solution of physical and metaphysical difficulties to special bands of scholars; and, on the whole, we accept the answers they give, where sufficient proof has been alleged, or we take no trouble about them. But the spiritual difficulties touch the heart and life of almost every man or woman. They claim that each one of us should look into them for ourselves, and

find each of us our own answer. The great problem is presented to us, and we hear a voice which says, Find my answer, or be devoured by me.

It is the old story of the Sphinx. The Greek, in his grave, sad way of looking upon life, beheld it as a struggle against the unintelligible. Something was to be discovered; and, if discovered, the fortunate one was master for a time of Life. But, if nothing were discovered, Life, as it went on inexorably, slew him; and he died, and the Greek had no certainty that he should live in the future by the mastery of the problem. Even he who found a portion of the answer, and could make his will the victor and not the victim of Life, was doomed to be overcome in the end by the undiscovered secret, and *Œdipus* falls into hideous ruin. Fate has its own way with him. Yet even in that story we catch a glimpse of a higher truth, when the tale is finished by an inspired poet. The blind, old man finds at last relief. The *Furies* change their countenance to him, for he understands at last the meaning of their inexorable pursuit. He understands, and dies in peace. We too, I believe, one and all of us, are fated to understand all things at last. We shall see face to face, knowing God as we are known by him. But it will be a far longer business for some of us than we think or than we shall like.

There are some for whom it is not long. It is plain that as the genius of some philosophers is almost intuitive with regard to the secrets of nature, so there are other men whose feeling is intuitive with regard to the secrets of spiritual life. They know without proof: they need no authority and no evidence. They have no trouble of heart, but walk with God as friend with

friend. But no one can tell how far previous education before they were born into this world may have given them that power.

On the other hand, just as children, and afterwards men, learn the sanctions of physical laws through the commission of a series of mistakes, for each of which they suffer punishment,—pursued relentlessly by the Furies till, their secret being found, they become the Eumenides,—so in the spiritual world also there are many who can only reach good through having known evil and overcome it, can only attain to the knowledge of truths through having found out by sad experience the uselessness and harm of false knowledge of them. We are pursued, as long as we are wrong in our ideas of God, by the scourge of restlessness, or despair, or anger. Not till we find the secret is there any pause. To discover a portion of it is not enough. We must pay the glorious penalty of our immortality; and that penalty is often renewed doubt and spiritual darkness. Often, we think we know all we need to know: we say we have reached the goal, our faith is secure, we have nothing more to conquer. It is the very moment when we are surprised by a new aspect of a truth and feel ourselves ignorant, only half-way, with faith and courage tottering and troubled. God, in what seems to our wearied eyes cruelty, drives us from our rest. A new difficulty rises before us, which we must solve or die, till at last, step by step, it may be here, it may be long hereafter, we enter the venerable grove, and know all; and our rest is perfect, for our comprehension is perfect.

It is the common objection that this is a long and needlessly harsh way of making us know him, when

God might do it so much sooner, if he would; and the greater part of our work this morning will centre round that objection.

In answer to it, there is first this,—that a good deal has been found out already, if people would take the trouble of looking at it. The scientific man enters into the knowledge of the past, and finds a certain number of things which have been already discovered. He has not to rediscover these things. And the spirit newly born into a spiritual life enters into the possession of the spiritual experience of the past. There are a certain number of statements about God and his relation to men which have slowly, during the spiritual history of the world, taken their places as foundation-stones. All sorts of buildings have been raised on these foundations,—creeds, schemes of redemption, a multitude of sects and churches; but, however various the buildings, there are a few foundation-stones always identical, and which one may now accept as axioms. Some insist on proving their existence; and, if they must, they must; but they lose a good deal of time, and it is not God's fault if men are fantastic.

Secondly, I do not know if, as the objection says, God *could* make us know all truth at once, being such as we are. It is more than probable that the sudden revelation of truth, for which we were not prepared, would either throw us into despair, or the truth itself would seem to us a lie. Revelation must be proportioned to the capacity of the organ that receives it. Truth is, in full, before Man; but only that part of it reaches him which his spiritual eye can take in. The rest, at present, would strike him blind. Your present ideas of God seem to you true;

but what would you have thought of them years ago, and what will you think of them ten years hence?

But you reply, Why were we not made capable of receiving the truth at once? Why are we so imperfect as to need all this slow training and all this suffering? A loving God ought to have saved us that. Well, that is pushing remonstrance pretty far. And I cannot feel at all with that remonstrance; for it demands of course, as I have often said, that we should cease to be men and women, and be other beings altogether, who have no trouble, no doubt, no struggle, no pain, no knowledge of evil, no progress of the kind we know, nothing of all that mingled success and failure, and all the feelings connected with it, which makes life so distressing, so dramatic, and often so delightful. I confess I should regret if that which we call human nature were taken out of the universe, and were replaced by what is supposed to be the angelic nature. The interest of the whole thing is so enchaining that I do not think one would care to be immortal, if everybody were good all in a moment, and knew everything at once; and I do not think the goodness would be worth much, or the knowledge either. Who cares for things purchased by no trouble? And what use are things, unless we care for them? I do not want to get rid of difficulties or mysteries, if the price be, as it must be, the destruction of the element of humanity in the universe.

And now, supposing you allow that that would be a misfortune, in what other way—human nature being as it is—is it possible that God should act toward it? Is there any other process conceivable of making a weak thing individually strong than by exercising what is

feeble in it against a difficulty? Is it possible to get wiser in any other way than by training the faculties, mental or spiritual, in the investigation of that which is doubtful and hidden?

In this matter, there is only one rule for all the spheres of human thought and action, for the life of animals and plants. All their progress is born out of antagonism: all their force, and therefore their amount of life, may be expressed in terms of the resistance they encounter. Therefore, considering the universality and inexorableness of this law, it is somewhat pitiable to hear the moan which so many persons make when doubt begins to distress and darkness falls upon their spiritual life.

When a long series of experiments made by a natural philosopher entirely fails, or when an unlooked-for result turns up in the course of the experiments, and seems to reverse all the theories he has held to before, he does not wail and cry on account of the failure. He begins again. Nor is he in despair at having to reconsider everything. On the contrary, he is excited to the highest pitch. Something new, some wide principle, is hidden in the failure or in the new result; and he cannot rest till he has unearthed it. For he has faith in nature answering his call and rewarding his toil. He does not suffer, for he knows that he is on the way to higher knowledge. It is true that the disappointment which the intellect suffers is not so painful as that of the spirit, nor does the overthrow of a scientific theory upturn and convulse life in the same way as the overthrow of a long-cherished method of faith. But the reason of this is that we are still subject to the bondage of thinking that God is angry with us on account of doubt, and that he will condemn

us because we are forced to reconsider our old system of belief. We do not believe in God as the philosopher believes in nature. We look upon him as capricious, passionate, and unfair. We have no conception as yet of him as a Father who often deliberately places us face to face with the unintelligible. We think we have lost him, when we have lost our past conception of him, when our spiritual rest is gone, and our light. But, if we trusted in this Fatherhood, and understood that our education is his care, and that it will take centuries to complete it, we should say to ourselves, when darkness falls on our soul and all our old views become vague and difficulties rise on every hand, exactly what the philosopher says to himself: "I have found out where my theory was either wrong or inadequate, and I have now a new interest in life. Let me, taking my past error itself as my starting-point, discover what is true. God will answer me, if I work, as nature answers the philosopher." And the moment the mystery comes, and doubt invades the heart, we shall say to ourselves: "Now I see that God my Father is plainly at work upon me. He is going to give me more to find out. I am again consciously under his training; and, if I am true and faithful, and do not tire of patient investigation, and keep my heart open by prayer, and my intellect clear from exaggeration, I shall step out of this darkness into clearer light, know more of him than I have known before, and suffer the ennobling pain and the ennobling pleasure of a new revelation."

But you say that it is of God himself that you doubt. He seems to you to be at variance with the moral feeling of your own soul. That is because your idea of God is

now lower and more inadequate than you need have. You have accepted certain theological accounts of his nature in the past, and they still cling to you, or, having lost them, you have not replaced them by others. "And this is God," you say. "I cannot believe in him." Well, that is God telling you that *that is not himself as he is to you*. Others are satisfied with that past conception: they can live on it spiritually, and it will not do to give them a higher view yet. But, now that you have been told that there is a higher aspect in which he may be seen, why are you angry with him, why are you despairing? Why do you not try to find out if there be no other view of him which will harmonize the belief of the soul with the reason of the man? As plainly as one spirit can speak to another, he is telling you that there *is* a higher knowledge of him that you have as yet to gain.

Dimly, it dawns upon you that this very distress and darkness is his work; and, if so, that there is only one explanation of it: that there is a Father who is educating you from point to point, and that he has put you into darkness, because the light you had was not enough for your spiritual growth; because, having done all it could for your education, the time has now come when you need a brighter light, a nobler idea of God and life.

You think you are to get that at once. That would break the law of the universe. New light can only be got by a fight against darkness. The soul cannot be revolutionized except through battle. The elements of a new life can only be assimilated through resistance. Otherwise, they would not be your own. They are woven with the fibres of the soul by daily struggle.



Without struggle, they would be mere surface things, which a breath of temptation would blow away.

The darkness does not vanish all at once, nor the light flash upon us: God understands our nature better than to make that error. But, when in our contest with the gloom and in our patient feeling after God, there comes first a faint glimmering of the truth which we shall possess, we rejoice and make it our own, and go on in its strength. Then a faint thread of rays steals in, then there is the morning star, then the cold flush of dawn, then warmer and warmer hues,—the heaven of our life, as we force our way onward, lighting up with new colors,—and then, suddenly, the new revelation leaps like the sun into the air, and our whole being is transfigured. The struggle has made us understand the light, step by step we have appropriated it, and *that* darkness is done with forever. Other doubt, other darkness, will succeed; but so far the curse of life has been conquered, and turned into a blessing. The Lord God has made our darkness to be light.

Now, I say that on the hypothesis that we have a Father who cares for our spirit, and who is educating it to perfection, all this process is explicable, and explicable in such a way that it confirms the love of God. And, if the theory explain the facts, is it not probable that the theory is true? And if such a probability exist, and stir us to higher life, and give us strength, what should be our prayer,—what but this? Lord, increase our faith.

The last answer I have to make to the objection that God's way of dealing with us is unfair and unloving is that it is plain that the process, if we go through it in

a reasonably noble manner, ennobles us. And all that is required from us is no vague feeling, no exalted spiritual passion, but just that which is required from every man in contact with any difficulty.

A philosopher meets with a new fact for which he can give no reason. It strikes at the very root of his system, or it is irreconcilable with it at present. It tells him to go back and begin again, or at least it opens out before him a vista of work to which he sees no end. Suppose his disappointment overwhelms him, suppose the shock makes him despair, and, falling away from his faith that everything is resolvable into the order of things, he strikes work, what follows? Idleness and its curse, the sense of intellectual degradation, a wasted life. His trial has not ennobled him; but every one knows that, had he had faith in himself and in nature, his work upon the difficulty would have personally ennobled him; that, had he said to himself, when suddenly this mysterious fact emerged in the midst of the known, when this inexplicable thing traversed the very theory which all the world accepted, "This means not so much that we are all wrong, but that there is a higher right to be found out: this inexplicable thing tells me—joyful me, counted worthy to find it!—that I am on the track of a new discovery," he would either have made the discovery, or at least hewn out the way partly to it, shown the point in the distance where the new star among the truths of science would be found, when the work had all been done.

He may be thus disgraced or ennobled according as he meets his difficulties. It is the same in common human life. We have it in our power, for a time, to ruin life,

to turn its greatest possibilities into curses. When, opposed by difficulties, we give ourselves up into the hands of unmanliness, fear, and laziness, it is indeed a miserable piece of work we make of life. We have it also in our power, when we are faithful, active, joyous, and courageous, to live one after another half a dozen lives in our space of sixty years, and to grow more wise and more penetrative and more self-commanding every year.

It is precisely the same in the difficulties and darkness of that which we call the spiritual life. They are to show us where we are weak, they are to suggest to us new discoveries on the nature of God, they are to give the soul something to do, to wake it up from lethargy, to develop its peculiar powers, to make it feel that God is inexhaustible, and that, let it dive into the ocean of his nature deeper than ever plummet sounded, it never can learn satiety nor know content. And are we to be indignant with the process which leads us to these things because it gives us pain, and to deny God's love because he will not let us rest in half-educated imperfection? That is a thought unworthy of our high destiny. A Greek would have been ashamed of it: a Christian Englishman should hate it as degrading.

In the struggle mentioned above as the struggle of the Thinker, the intellect of man is rendered noble and its powers strengthened. In the spiritual struggles of life, the spirit of man is rendered noble and its powers developed. The strengthening of spiritual powers by exercise has been often dwelt on; but this strife with doubt and darkness is especially ennobling, because it gives us slowly the possession of the noblest ideas. In our darkest moments, we never lose the conviction that the

idea of God is inexpressibly noble, and, as revealed in Christ, inexpressibly tender as well as noble, even when we have ceased for the time to believe in him. Is it really possible that any one can compare it, as an idea alone, to that of the rigid circle of constant force, or to that of humanity as an organism? It alone touches *all* that is in us, and develops all,—intellect, heart, conscience, imagination, and spirit. Pure thought, pure love, perfect righteousness, infinite beauty, producing infinite varieties of itself in thought and feeling and form; the all-wise, all-sustaining, educating Father of all the spirits who have flowed from him, clothed even in the weakest words,—this idea makes one's being thrill with a strange, exalting power. “And I heard as it were the voice of a trumpet speaking to me, and saying, Come up hither.” That saying expresses its impulse on our life. Linked with it are other thoughts,—the immortality of Man in God, the salvation from evil of all mankind in him, the redemption of human nature completed, self-sacrifice as the central principle of all life in God and in Man. These are but a few: but, as they grow in us, they ennoble existence; they make of this earth an august temple; they burn in us like fire, consuming evil, kindling good; and any process, however long, which leads us to their lofty mountain range, is worth going through with faithful patience. Let us therefore pray: O Lord our God, guide us! Deepen our patience, warm our aspiration. Above all, increase our faith.

Ah me! you reply, I may be becoming nobler as I go through life, though it be by doubt and darkness; but I am in exquisite pain, and I want happiness. I want peace, ease. I do not want to be tortured.

Well, then, you had better surrender and sink down into your happiness. Only beware, for it will become a worse pain than that you suffer now. The only way in this world to get peace is to make it out of pain. And, after all, did you come into this world to find happiness? Was it for your own sake alone that you were created into the midst of this vast humanity? What are you that you should pay so much attention to yourself, and lose in that attention the thought of others?

You are not here to find happiness directly as the first thing. You are here to discover truth; and the way is dark, and leads to the Cross before it finds the Resurrection. You are here to consecrate your life to the discovery of a portion of the Divine Law, to practise it, and to diffuse the knowledge and love of it among your brethren; and it is a work which will call upon you to go through much darkness, and to make sacrifices which will seem at first to rend your heart in sunder. You are here to help to build up the Temple of Humanity, to give your life for the welfare of the race; and it is not possible to do that work and at first to have an easy life of it.

Happiness, indeed! What business have we yet with happiness? We must win it before we wear it. Only toil can give us the power of enjoying. And God knows this, and he puts us through this long and painful process. He saves us; but we must work out our own salvation. He gives light; but we must conquer darkness. And, if we want the lazy sweets of life, the ease undignified by any thought, the life untroubled by any disturbing doubt, why, we may have it by throwing ourselves out of the sphere of God's training, and sinking down into our native mud. The happiness of Circe's sty, the happiness of being unconscious of our own deg-

radation, and loving it,—“Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life,”—that is not the glorious end a child of God desires. God will not permit that we have happiness at the expense of spiritual greatness.

But, if we will have something better far,—a grave nobility of spirit; a life thrilled through and through with august ideas bravely won; a vast and practical love for man, in which self will be forgotten; an aspiration toward truth untiring as the eagle’s flight, and with his sun-fixed eye; the enthusiasm of one who loves with passion God and man; the temperate reasonableness which rules enthusiasm, so as to direct it to its work with wisdom,—then there is something higher than our miserable happiness. It is the awful blessedness of life with God, the knowledge that we are growing up into better things, the certain hope of a life of eternal righteousness and love and joy, the stern delight of duty done.

Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear  
 The Godhead’s most benignant grace;  
 Nor know we anything more fair  
 Than is the smile upon thy face.  
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,  
 And fragrance in thy footing treads:  
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,

And the immortal Heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong.

They are lines whose very sound rings with the triumphant strength of the life which we shall possess at last, the strength of conquest over all darkness, sin, and death,—the life which never fails in energy and joy, for it never fails in love. To win it and to wear it well, there is but one prayer: it is the prayer of the disciples,—“Lord, increase our faith.”

## GOD IS SPIRIT.—I.

1873.

“God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”—*JOHN* iv., 24.

THE summer months had gone by, and autumn had advanced to seed-time, when Jesus, journeying to Galilee, stayed to rest near Samaria, in the plain of Sichem. It was about mid-day, and he sat by the well of Jacob. While he waited for his disciples, whom he had sent away to buy bread, a woman came from the neighboring city of Samaria to draw water. He asked her to give him drink, and began to talk with her about the well and the water. It was one of those opportunities that he never neglected of awaking spiritual curiosity, of stirring into life the seeds of God that he believed were in every human soul. Seizing, as was his custom, on that which lay before their eyes as the means of teaching, he spoke of a water of which whosoever drank should never thirst again. It was the water of the divine Life which he had come to give: it would quench the thirst of the soul, and it would become, in all who received it, a living well, springing up for ever from one life to another throughout eternity.

On that portion of the conversation I do not speak,

but on the other portion into which it divided itself. "How is it," said the woman, "that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria?" She expressed in that phrase a real wonder, a wonder shared in afterward by the disciples; and, if we conceive what some time ago would have been thought if any well-known religious leader was seen in earnest conversation with a strong partisan of Atheism, we should have an idea of the way in which the woman and the disciples marvelled.

It was a strange scene on which the sun looked down: a Jewish prophet of the lineage of David, for whom a poor Samaritan woman was drawing water; and between them that rapid interchange of thought that belongs, one might say, to equals and to friends. It was as if there was nothing to divide them, as if the prejudices of ages had in a moment rolled away: it was the overthrow of an exclusive caste, it was the prophecy of a new era of religious breadth and charity. The scene itself was a parable of the idea of the speech that closed it. "Woman, I say to you, the hour cometh," etc. The scene that followed it when the disciples came back and stood in an astonishment that had both doubt and blame in it is a parable of that which has ever happened since, though less and less as Christian charity has influenced the world, when any man has dared to express, either in act or speech, the meaning of my text.

It is that meaning that we have to discuss to-day.

The woman laid down the question fairly: "You say Jerusalem is right, we Gerizim. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem men ought to worship." We have both ancestral usage to



hallow and confirm our faith, and who shall decide that I am wrong or you right? No conclusion can be come to: our separation is undying.

It is more or less the condition of the world now on the subject of religion. Jerusalem condemns Gerizim, and Gerizim mocks at Jerusalem, and the bigotry and uncharitableness of both are about equal. There is nothing to choose between the Church or the Theists or the Moralists who deny all religion. A holy horror is met by bitter scorn; and one and all are equally incapable of putting themselves into the place of the others, of any of that imaginative power which realizes the difficulties, the temptations, the long-established circumstances, the traditional emotions and ideas of the others—or of any of that loving-kindness which would say, “There must be good in my opponents’ opinions, or they would not care to go on contending for them: there must be earnestness for truth, or they would not fight so steadily.” On the contrary, it is quite common for all parties to assume that their opponents are hypocrites or liars, or, at the best, foolish and blind. Those who profess a lofty tolerance and liberty, whose one attack is an attack on bigotry, are often the most bigoted of all. Listen to one who professes morality as against religion: it is Samaritan against Jew over again. Listen to the Atheist as against the believer: it is Sadducee as against Pharisee over again.

The whole thing is childish, like two boys in the streets calling one another names. And it is indescribably distressing. How can the world move rapidly onward, as long as we indulge in a spirit of hating one another, which makes ourselves hateful, as long as we

have none of that loving-kindness to each other which will render it possible for us to unite in action for the good of all and the discovery of truth? There is but little hope of any swift progress, till we can all say: "The time now is that neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Nevertheless, it is impossible not to see that a good deal of this contention is unavoidable, and that it has its good side. In this world, we cannot yet have peace, without previous war in matters pertaining to truth. Every truth or form of truth calls up its opponent falsehood. Every good insisted on evokes its own special adversary, and war is inevitable. I came not, said Christ, to send peace on earth, but a sword. Secondly, truth is seldom, if ever, unmixed. Those who declare it best hold along with it the elements of untruth,—evil in the midst of their good. And it is not unfrequently the case that those who are for the most part in the wrong, and who fight against the truth, have with them the very elements of truth that are wanting in the other side,—the good which will, when it is added to the better side, make its revelation entirely good.

You may be pretty sure that is really the case, when the worst side lasts a long time. *It will last, till its share of truth is assimilated.* And the really wise thing for any one to do who knows that on the whole he is on the right side in any great controversy of truth, and who finds that the other side still hold their own fairly, is to say to himself: "It is *impossible* (since God is true,

and directing the course of the world) that my opponents should last so long, unless they have some truth in their error; and it is my business to find that out. When I do, I shall not only complete my own side, but I shall also overcome their error, and probably in such a way as to bring them over to the whole truth. It is perhaps not their love of error that keeps them my enemies, but, first, the natural clinging they have to the truth in their error, and, secondly, the incompleteness of my truth, because I do not as yet possess the portion of truth they hold."

In both cases, it is plain that war is necessary, the world being such as it is. False things have to be proved to be false, evil things have to be gone through and exhausted, and the battle must be set in array. But it is also plain that a higher ground is possible to some persons, where the only thing that is important is the truth, where all the minor things involved in the battle.—questions of place, such as Jerusalem and Gerizim, of the church or the meeting-house, questions of mere opinion, of form, of symbols, of one religion as against another,—things which give all its violence to the battle because they involve personal questions,—are neither seen nor felt as of any vital importance.

There are those who, partly by nature and partly through experience, stand on this higher ground. It is the ground on which Christ stood, when he said, "Woman, the time cometh when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem will ye worship the Father." And the duty of those who stand with him, and by his strength upon it, is not to blame too severely the intolerance of the warriors who fight on the lower ground,

as is too much the custom. Harsh blame only rivets them in their intolerance. Nor should you forget that you need great tact in dealing with others, if you stand on this higher ground. To live on it destroys a part of your influence. Your freedom seems indifference to truth to the people below. They turn on you, and say: "You blame our impetuosity. It is because you do not care for truth as much as we do." For their intolerance, till they can rise out of it, will seem to them to be zeal for truth. Your duty, on the contrary, is to search out the truth, wherever it may be, on every side, to praise it, to dwell on it again and again, till you isolate it, as it were, from its surrounding error, and make men conscious of it,—to reiterate, "*There you are right,*" till men's minds are fixed on the points of truth. Once that is done, the error will drop away from them slowly, but certainly; and the contest itself will also slowly change its spirit. It will, since the truths contended for are now more clearly seen, become less selfish, less mixed up with desire for personal victory, less eager for worldly honor and reward, and more eager for the victory of truth itself. And, when that takes place, it will soon become more courteous, less one-sided, less intolerant; and it cannot help becoming so. That ought to be your work. That is the true way to reduce bigotry. Above all, if you have been lifted into the calmer region, and feel that this or that outward opinion or transient form matters little, if only God and man be loved, it is your duty never to let any temptation hurry you into the evils you see in those below your region. Shame, shame, on any one who, living with Christ in the sphere of permanent and invio-

lable truth, shall allow himself, through any temper, to be betrayed into violent or scornful condemnation!

Yet, for all that, there must be on your part no paltering with truth, no indifference to it. Looking down on the two sides that contend against one another on any one subject that involves a truth, you must be able—however much you may see true things in both parties—to say which side has the most right, which side it is right to join, which side the progress of the world demands should be supported. One must be preferable to the other,—Jerusalem or Samaria,—though there may be a higher and nobler side than either. It is here that part of Christ's answer to the woman comes in: "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."

The answer was given with regard to the existing state of things. It conveyed no absolute truth, but only a relative truth. It did not intend to say that the existing worship at Jerusalem was the best possible, or that it was even specially good. It only said that it was distinctly better than the worship of Samaria.

It is well to observe in this the delightful reverence of Christ for Truth. He lived in another region than that of religious quarrel. To him, both Judaism and Samaritanism were worn-out forms of truth; and he came to put them both aside, and to lead men into a new world. But had he been like some of our modern prophets, who place themselves above religious disputes, he would not have thought it worth while to decide which of them had the most truth, which of them *then* was worthiest. "Both are nothing to me," he would then have said to the woman. "Leave them both alone,

and come up and sit with me." And the woman could not have understood him, and would have thought him careless of truth. Two things which you know well enough are the case with regard to some of our prophets. They are not understood, and they are thought to be indifferent to truth; and both these imputations (of which sometimes some of them are proud, since they isolate them from men in lonely dignity) — though it is odd to be proud of not being understood, odder still of being separated from man — hinder their work, and spoil the good they might do to men. But Christ did not take that position. Though he lived in the loftiest region, at home with absolute truth, he could come down among the strifes of men about relative truth, and see on which side in the lower region the greatest amount of truth lay. He was not thinking of himself, nor of what the world would think of him, nor whether his way of putting truth would win the day. He thought only of the cause of truth itself and of the advantage of mankind.

He thought of the cause of truth, and he felt that it was of high importance that he should plainly say whether Jerusalem or Samaria were the nearest to truth. And if we live with him in a world above forms and opinions, churches and sects, we shall often have, if we wish to do any good, to follow him in this. It is a great difficulty sometimes to descend and take the trouble of weighing opposite views, to decide between this sect and that, when we do not personally care about either. It is our temptation, living in the region of ideas, to despise the region of forms where the battle is going on, to use the language of the Latitudinarian, though we do not

belong to that meteoric party. But it is a difficulty we should overcome and a temptation we should resist. For, though it is of no importance to us personally, it is of the greatest importance to the progress of the world that no indifference to truth, even to comparative truth, should be shown. We must take trouble and say, Jerusalem is better than Samaria.

And the grounds of our decision should be the same as Christ's. "Salvation is of the Jews": it is best for mankind that they should prevail over the Samaritans. That is the question we should ask ourselves, laying aside all prejudice, stepping down out of our position in the future, into the midst of the existing state of things,—From which of these contending parties will go forth most good, which possesses elements most capable of being naturally developed into a higher religious form, which has most useful truth for man? And, when you have answered that, decide on supporting the party you think fulfils best the conditions for the present, not for its own sake, but as against the other, always however declaring that there is a higher view, which if men could once grasp, both would fade away. Jerusalem is better than Samaria, and to be supported as against Samaria at present; but before long, when men are ready, Jerusalem will be set aside by a higher Law of Life. Neither here nor yet at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father.

Another ground of decision is contained in Christ's reply: "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship." The Samaritans had cast aside the Prophets, and gone back to the revelation of Moses. They had left out the last and the most important link in the

long chain of the development of religious truth, and naturally their idea of God was grossly inadequate to the time in which they lived. They were like that party in our Church, who, putting aside all the later developments of Christianity, go back to the early Church to find the form of their religious thought. And so inadequate, so behindhand was their idea of God, in comparison to that which it ought to be, that they might be said to worship they knew not what,—it might be God, it might be an Idol, but at least it had no living growth, no connected development. It was a stunted shrub in comparison with the Jewish idea of God.

When you want then to know, among all the religions or forms presented to you, which to support in the present, ask yourself which can knit itself in the most unbroken descent to the longest past; which has grown most like a tree, year by year, century by century, extending its branches wider, lifting its head higher; which has taken into itself most constantly, most consistently, and most progressively all human efforts after truth; which has, in its highest and best form—for of course, in judging, we look for that—conceived God most nobly and most in accordance with the wants and aspirations of mankind; that is, in which has the idea of God been continually expanding, in equal step with the growth of the world. In that, men will best know what they worship; and that (however you may personally have outgrown its present form) is the one worthy of your present support. And I think, of course, or I should not be here, that Christianity answers best to that test, and that any form of it, even one as far below your higher view of it as Judaism was below the idea of Christ's worship,



is more worthy of the comparative support of which I speak than an unchristian religion. Lofty as are the aims of Positivism, and unselfish as are the motives of unchristian Moralism, I should have no hesitation in giving that comparative support to a form of Christianity with which I did not personally sympathize, as against these other forms of religion, because I should feel that truths more useful to man were contained in a form of Christianity, however inadequate, than in the very highest form of mere Moralism, because I should feel that the one was capable of development and the other not. At the same time, I should try to clearly mark the truths held by Positivist or Moralist, and show wherein they were better and more advanced than the Christian forms they opposed. And with regard to those forms of Christianity, if they were behind that which they ought to be, I should not say that they were absolutely good, but only better relatively than the others; and that, being inadequate forms, they were bound to perish to make room for higher forms which should assimilate the truths proclaimed by the other side, and complete themselves by doing so. That would be my view; but each man must judge for himself, and take the consequences of his judgment.

Leaving, however, this special application on one side, the method remains, and the teaching on the whole question is plain, whatever may be your higher ground. You must not be intolerant of the battle waged in the world between forms and opinions about truth; and you must, by forming a judgment as to which is relatively best and declaring it, show that you are not indifferent to truth, even to comparative truth. That is what we learn from Christ's answer.

But there was a farther answer. The woman had stated the whole question of religious strife, and we have discussed that part of Christ's reply which had to do with existing circumstances. Jerusalem was better than Samaria. But there was something better still, the higher spiritual life in which the questions in dispute between Jerusalem and Samaria would wholly cease; the life in the spirit and in truth which should pass beyond Jerusalem as a place of worship, and everywhere worship God; in which the temple and altar were neither on Mount Moriah nor Mount Gerizim, but set up in every faithful heart; in which all contest should die, for all, however different the form of their creed, should worship God in unity, because beneath all forms the spirit should be one,—in which all division of heart should be merged in that unity of love where there should be neither Jew nor Samaritan, but only two brothers who should realize their brotherhood beneath all outward differences, because they would both feel themselves children of one Father. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."

What a rush of light comes with the words! It is like the sun dispersing night. What a flood of peace! It is as if into the midst of a battlefield Love and sacred Quiet had stepped in hand in hand, till the arms dropped from the warriors' hands, and they knew and embraced as brothers one another. It is with an awful reverence mingled with the worship of delight, with admiration rushing into love, that we listen to words so beautiful that it were worth any suffering in life to get into their atmosphere or to share in the spirit that prompted them.

The hour was coming, the hour was now,—for the new Revelation was already contained in him who spoke,—when all limits of time and space, of forms and ceremonies, should be removed between Man and God, and men should worship in spirit—the spirit of God, in truth—the absolute Truth. Now, even now, to Christ, all controversies about Jerusalem or Samaria were idle: he dwelt far off from strife upon the spiritual hills of truth.

And we, taking this new conception of his into our hearts, rise with him into the higher region where the woman's question seemed to have no meaning, where religious strife is dead because God is worshipped as Spirit and known as Truth. Neither in the Church of England nor in the Church of Rome, neither in Theism nor Evangelicalism, neither in High Church nor Broad Church, do we now worship the Father. We take up for the outward vehicle of a life that worships in spirit and truth whatever form of creed suits us best, whatever seems to our careful judgment to be the truest, and to hold, on the whole, truths in the best way for the world. And we never dream of considering the form of creed we hold as final, or as containing the whole of truth. It is, for the time, relatively truer to us than others; and we make use of it. But to us God is everywhere; and we worship the Father most truly when we enter the realm of Infinite Love, where he abides, beyond the strife of men. And, when we have so knelt, and prayed in spirit and in truth, and return to mix with the religious turmoil, we cannot now specialize our God in any outward form. We cannot bind his Presence down within any limited form of confession or creed. We can

only smile when any Church claims to possess the whole of truth. And we think to ourselves: "In every religion, in every sect, in every superstition even, must I find—since he is Father of all men, and hath not left himself without witness in any single heart—some portion of that One Truth which is so manifold in expression. And life is too short, when I have so much truth to find out, for me to have any time to look after and abuse the falsehoods. Therefore, I will love men, in order to get at the best of them; and, when I get at that, I shall find some new phase of truth in them, and there I shall confess the presence of God and worship him in spirit and in truth. So shall the whole world of religious thought, and, had I time, every human soul, become a temple where I can praise and pray, and have the profoundest joy." For is there any joy in the world equal to that we feel when we are able to worship, in truth, that which we confess the noblest? There is no delight to equal adoration, when one loves, and rightly loves, the Person one adores.

And now, that being the spirit of your life, do you not plainly see that the woman's question, so far as you are concerned, is answered? For your inward life, religious disputes do not exist. You only take a part in them when you have to form a judgment, for the sake of the existing world, as to the comparative value of forms of truth. And, when you take part in them in this way, you cannot do it with violence or scorn, with intolerance or bigotry. These things are now impossible to you. They cannot exist in the atmosphere you breathe, nor have they any place in the work your life is devoted to,—the discovery of truth in every man and in every

religious work of man, and the worship of God in every phase of truth that you discover. Your life flows on a stream of love; and your companion, as you descend the river, to find at last the ocean of God's love and truth, is Truth itself. This is the Spirit in which you live, and the Spirit is God himself. Such a life is one long worship, and he whom you worship is a Father.

## GOD IS SPIRIT.—II.

1873.

“God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”—*JOHN* iv., 24.

IT was not an utterance unknown to the heathen world before the coming of Christ, that God was Spirit. The Greeks, the philosophic Hindus, the later Platonists of Alexandria, and many others in many nations, had said it, and said it well. Then what was there new in it on the lips of Christ? How was he more remarkable when he said it than the teachers who had gone before him? It is a question often on the lips of the opponents of Christianity, and it arises from their ignorance of that which they oppose. For where do they find that Christ put himself forward as giving especially new truths? A new method he did give; new commandments, new inferences from ancient truths, he did supply; a new harmony of truths, a new centre for them, he did give; but he was far too profoundly convinced of the consistent and continuous development of religious truth to dream of creating anything absolutely new in Truth. His work was linked to the first dawn of religious truth in the world, and was the farther development and collection and completion of all the truth

that had been before his time. He used up all the existing materials of truth. What more he did is not my business here. I am only concerned to say that the present objection has absolutely no meaning at all as against Christ, and has none in this case. In many points, the quality of the spiritual doctrine of God as proclaimed by the Greek philosophers was as high as that of Christ. It was not, then, in its novelty altogether that it was superior. It was in this: that he for the first time made it common property. He brought it and other truths which philosophers and men of culture had kept to themselves—for they did not believe that the uncultivated could understand them—down to the ranks of the ignorant and the poor, to children and to women. He believed not only in the divine capacity of the soul of every man to receive truth; but he believed also, and it was a harder thing, in the intellectual power of all men, women, and children to comprehend truths, once the soul was awakened. Noble emotion would kindle the intellect. It was that idea that the philosophers had never seized, and it was by that idea that Christ far excelled them.

Another than he had done the same before his time. That was the Indian Prince who gained the name of Buddha. He, too, laid his truths before the common people as property which ought to be common and could be common. In that point of the manner of teaching, he was at one with Christ. The contest, then, as to the superiority of Christianity and Buddhism does not rest on the manner of teaching, but on the quality of the doctrine taught; and I do not think any one can rationally doubt as to the place to be given to the doctrines of

Buddha and Christ with regard to the nature of God,—the point in question to-day.

So far then, we come to this conclusion. Christ taught a doctrine about God as spirit as high as the Greek, in a manner as noble as Buddha. He told a truth which the Buddhist excludes as untrue, in a way which the Greek philosophers would have thought absurd. That makes him sufficiently unique as a teacher.

Think what it was that he did here! He spoke the divinest, the central truth of all the loftiest Aryan philosophers to a poor, ignorant, and heretic woman,—even in speaking it to a *woman* transcending at once all the customs and ideas of the philosophers. In itself, that was a revolution,—the admission of women into the highest spheres of thought. But it is even more astonishing, when we think that he who claimed to be the very Son of God placed this ignorant peasant so far on an intellectual and spiritual equality with himself as to believe her capable of comprehending and feeling the deepest truth of all. Do you appreciate the daring and splendor of that? What does it not say of his insight into the human heart, of his infinite trust in goodness, of his belief in the capacity of the soul, of his reverence for the power of the human intellect!

Theologians tell us that Christ did not honor human nature as it was, and they have woven theories about its utter fall. But the life of Christ in vivid act and speech is one long contradiction of the lie which says that we are by nature not only far gone from righteousness (that is plain enough), but utterly separated from God. Neither from his light of wisdom nor from his love of righteousness are we apart. Neither in brain nor heart



are we divided from him. We are his children on all sides of our nature. And it is our work to go through the world believing in these divine capabilities of heart and brain, feeling that when we speak of divine truths there is a divinity in man that will answer to them, and bringing to all alike, encouraged by this lofty faith, the truths which philosophers claim as only theirs, because only to be grasped after long and special culture.

We take our stand with Christ, and say: "Awaken love, and men will comprehend anything. Quicken the action of the brain by stirring high emotion, and all its powers are illuminated. Sow truth, and there is a vital power in the dullest, most barbarous soul, which will sooner or later, here or hereafter, assimilate it." And why? It is the natural food of man. It was curious that philosophy could not see that fact, nor that it was true of all men.

The ancient philosophers failed because they could neither understand nor believe in that. They kept their truths within their own circle, and in doing so they not only failed to influence men widely, but they lost the truths also that they held. And they lost them for precisely the same reason they had for not giving them, because they would not believe enough in men to cast them forth over the soil of the popular heart. To keep any truth within an exclusive circle is to insure its decay within that circle. It will take meaner and meaner forms, because more and more obscure ones. Its early vigor will be exhausted by confinement to a few minds, who will tend more and more to routine. It will grow gradually decrepit, and cease to have the youth which kindles others, and will end by either slow consumption

or sudden death. For it will suffer morally under these conditions, as a family suffers physically that only intermarries within itself. It will suffer from protection, as an article of commerce suffers. Truth must intermarry with all types of mind, in order to preserve its moral and intellectual vigor. There must be free trade in truth, if it is to be healthy.

Moreover, to confine any truth within a limited sphere is not only to bring about its decay, but also to delay its recognition by the world. The main object of those who know truth is not to boast themselves of having it while others have it not,—and that there should be some who do this but shows the radical vice in these exclusive sects of culture,—but to work, that mankind may share in it, and be blest by its possession. Now, the only way to get mankind to take it in is to send it forth everywhere. It will then be taken up by men, mistaken, and thrown into forms which will partly contradict its meaning. This will irritate its original teachers, and naturally so. But they ought not only to have the moral patience to endure that, but the intelligence to see that it is a necessary step toward the reception of a truth that it should go through a number of inadequate representations of its meaning. Sooner or later, that process will have to be gone through; and the longer, through dislike of it, men keep back their truths from the common people, the more do they put off the day when they will be clearly understood and fully received. But the Nemesis of an aristocracy of culture is that it loses intelligence and the sense that handles daily life.

Do not think when I say this that I depreciate culture

in itself, or the forms which advanced knowledge and thought give to truth. On the contrary, they are as useful as necessary. Culture, seeing further than the world in which it lives, prophesies the forms which Truth will possess in the future, sows seeds which will germinate into forests, and prepares the mind of the world for farther revelations. It has its place, and its work is a noble one. But it is false to its work and its place. It ruins its own use, and becomes a retarding element, when it isolates its truths through contempt for the ignorant, when it refuses to believe in the capabilities of man.

Therefore, let any truth you possess go about freely, so that it may be produced in various forms in various minds, and assimilate new elements from new soils. Let it not only get into learned men who are partly conventionalized by the traditions of a school, but into the natural and untaught minds of the uneducated, where it will find original, if strange, forms,—forms not too high for the existing world to adopt, such as exclusive culture gives it for its own exclusive worship; forms which can be used and worked by ordinary men, however much they may dismay the cultivated. Do not be too afraid or too squeamish. Put Truth forth into the big world among rough hearts: give it, as you give freedom, to all men. Then it will spread, keep alive, and finally triumph.

It was this Christ saw, and therefore Christianity flew far and near, took a novel life in every heart, a novel form in every nation, and though its ideas, by the very nature of the method, were travestied, or turned upside down, or idealized too much, or realized too grossly

(in fact, they suffered every transformation they could suffer), yet they spread, they lived an ever-renewed life; and, clearly conceived and justly felt by some, they have already shaken off many of their false and absurd forms, and stand out, the leading conceptions on which the progress of the race is founded. The false and absurd forms, or the inadequate ones that still remain, will also be exhausted in the sifting and resifting which the intelligence and heart of all the world will give them; and after ages of development, during which mankind shall have gone through them up to its full height, they will appear as the sun appears when, lifting his majesty out of the clouds of morning and drinking them into his light, he illuminates with joy and radiance all mankind.

The whole conception, the whole method, was worthy of a divine mind, was prompted by a foresight truly Godlike. It needed intense belief in God, it needed intense belief in human nature; and it had both in Christ in a way which was true of no other teacher the world has known. It was a method which, once accepted (and in its determined carrying out of it the Christian Church has been true to its Founder), became the enemy of all aristocracies of culture and religion, and wherever it prevails it is their foe. Christ is at the head of a spiritual democracy before God. He said: "All men are equal: in spirit and in heart, they are all to be conceived as capable of receiving the same truths, though the degree of their growth in them be different. In the giving of truth there shall be no exclusiveness. Therefore, I take this central truth, and give it to this ignorant woman to make of it what she likes. God will

direct it; the seed sown will grow,—it may be into a false form, but it will finally clothe itself with a true one.” And how right he was! Better truth in a false form than a lie in a true one; better truth in an inadequate form than exclusive silence about truth. The form will perish, the truth will remain and rise again with a new morning in its eyes.

That is what I have to say of the method of teaching which Christ practised, as I learn it from this story. And now for the truth itself. God is Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

I approach one part of it, or God as a spirit in all men, by dwelling on Christ’s act in giving this truth to the Samaritan woman as a representative act. In giving it to her, he gave it to all in her state of intellect and heart. He proclaimed in giving it to her that it was not only for learned and civilized people, but for all people, however ignorant, savage, and poor; and, if for all, then the spiritual life, or the indwelling of God, was possible to all. But, if it was possible for all, it could only be so by a previous kinship between all human spirits and God the source of spirit. To give it to all was then to proclaim that God as spirit moved in all.

Again, to put it in another form. When Christ gave that truth to all, it was in fact the logical carrying out of the truth itself. God is Spirit. Did it occur to no philosopher when he excluded some from the knowledge of that truth as incapable of feeling it that he was practically denying it? How could God be Spirit, if any human spirit whatever was radically unable to know and live by that truth. For it supposes God — unless

we deny a soul to the ignorant or the brutal, as some more reasonably did—as in all spirits; it supposes that no spiritual being can exist at all except through the existence in it of the essential spirit. That is the logical inference: if he is spirit, he is in all spirits; in all living, thinking, feeling beings of whatever kind. What! the philosopher would say, and some are saying now,—in the Helot, and the barbarian, in those who live like the brutes, who mock at knowledge? in the far back men in whom our race first felt intelligence and whose remains we find in caves and dens of the earth? in the gross savage of Australia and Africa, in races as far removed from our intelligence as east is from west? in the criminal and the outcast of our streets, in the sinner as in the seraph? Yes, that is simply what Christ said and meant, believe it or not, if you will,—that is simply what the statement that God is Spirit partly means, unless we deny that there is a God who is Spirit. There is in all who are born into this world as part of mankind a universal Life, and that life is God's life, latent in some, more formed in others, vivid and full in the best of the race, but absent from none. None are divorced from the Life of Truth and Love and Righteousness, none able finally to be divorced from it; and though that Life in the man, like Truth in the world, may run wild and run to evil, it will be sovereign in him in the end and perfect him, as Truth will be sovereign in the race. That is the first conception I give you with regard to the truth of God as Spirit.

Believing that, what should be the result on our life? We should ourselves worship God in this truth, and in its spirit live among men. For ourselves, to worship

God in this truth is to live one's whole spiritual life in it and by it, believing that God is in us. We may have been reckless, godless, because we heard our nature pronounced to be corrupt in all its ways: we now turn with a thrill of joy, and recognize, led by the light of a new faith, the very Spirit of God in us, speaking, living, impelling, working with us for our perfection. We believe, not in the degradation of our nature, but in the inspiration by God of its best desires and affections. We know it is true that we are twofold beings, half-evil and half-good; and we know our evil all the better when we are conscious of the good in us. We feel all our human weakness and its failures; but we also know that a high resolve which passes into action, and the uncontented energy which despises a day gone by without some progress toward our ideal,—that the tears of a penitence which is not repented of, and the faith which begins again after failure,—that the hopes which are so bright and pure that they act on us like realities, and the Love which is making our whole character new,—are things in us not merely human, but the work within us of an inspiring Spirit whom we worship in spirit.

There is indeed a God with us, in our hearts. Believe in that, live in the truth that God is incarnating himself in you, that his spirit is at one with yours. So that, if you will, your thought and work and will may be God's thought and work and will, and you yourself become a Christ, dwelling in God, and God in you, at one with the Father, as he was at one with the Father. Realizing the full meaning of the last part of the prayer of the Saviour in the Gospel of St. John, all life will become divine, all thought godlike, all work glorious: you will

live in the very Being of the Eternal and Righteous God, through the power of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, worship God not only in yourselves in this truth, but live in it and in its spirit among men, and your outward life will then be in it worship of God in spirit and truth.

What will that worship be? It will be to search for the divine in men, to assume its existence, to delight in it, and draw it forth. Most of us assume the contrary, and we find it. Men find that which they seek; and there is plenty of evil to find, if we like that sort of discovery. It is bad and ugly work; for, looking for evil and finding it, we make men more evil than they were before. Did you ever search for falsehood in your child, and not find it, and not make your child false by continually imputing falsehood to it, and making it conscious of it? That is the wicked work men may do in the world to their fellow-men, and it is devilish work indeed. Or, if they do not find evil,—being spurred by their base assumption of evil in man,—they create it. Their eyes are blind to good, quick to image sin. Their very intelligence is made foolish by prejudice of evil,—just as some in a late autobiography refused to believe in a disclaimer of wrong from the lips of the dead, as if it could be a lie! This is also, in its stupidity, as well as its malice, quite in harmony with the devil nature.

It was not, it never was, the way of Christ. He neither looked for evil, and found it, nor was forced by an ugly necessity to invent it. He assumed, on the contrary, the divine in all, searched for it, expected it, and found it. And it is that more than all else in him that attaches me to him: it is that I reverence and wor-



ship with my whole soul. Let it be our way of worshipping God the Spirit among men. Let us say, when we meet man, woman, or child: "The goodness of God is in this human spirit, if I only could find it. Give me therefore, Divine Spirit, whom in the spirit of this truth I worship, power to find thyself here in my fellow-man. If thy goodness be clear within him, may it teach and help me: if it be latent, overlaid with error and sin, may I have the blessedness of drawing it forth to light, and making known to the man how good he may become, how near God he is. What my Saviour did for the Magdalene and for Zaccheus be my example and my aim."

That will be a blessed life,—a real life of worship of God in spirit and truth. It will lead you, as it led Christ, to care very little for the judgments of the world about persons or social classes, or for the judgments of moralists and so-called religious persons. It will lead you into what the world and its whitewashed sepulchres will call false charity and immoral laxity of opinion. You will be said to be mad, or to have a devil. You may be called not of God, because you do not obey the maxims of social opinions, and infidel because you traverse the faiths of society. But that will matter little, if you are sure of your faith in goodness. The talk of the world about you will be as the hum of a city to a man who lives above it on the hill,—it will scarcely reach your ear. Nor is it worth your while to listen to it. It leadeth only to penury of intelligence and to meanness or hardness of heart. The maxims of society and the condemnations it formulates by them on the ground of its ceaseless suspicion of evil are so wicked at times, and

so ugly always, that your great difficulty will be to extend to the persons who put them forth the tolerance and the loving-kindness which you must not give to their opinions; and the spirit of them is so dull and unintelligent as well as uncharitable—is not all want of charity necessarily stupid?—that the greatest good that can happen to a man's heart or intellect is to have escaped altogether from the atmosphere of the world. But you must not expect at the same time to get on in the world: you must frankly give up its rewards, if you choose to escape from its region; and you must escape on Christ's ground,—on the ground of believing in the goodness of man. It will not do to separate yourself from the world, and to keep up harsh judgments and contempt of men and disbelief in goodness, and become the morose and inhospitable scorner of men. You must not, in setting yourself against the opinions of the world, disbelieve in the divine Spirit in those who hold those opinions, else you are just as bad as they. Nay, more, in such a separation you are in worse case than if you lived in the world,—for there you are at least among men and have a chance of attaining belief in goodness,—in bitter isolation you have none. No, you must live your separate life in separation from opinions, not from men, and live it freely, nobly, on the ground of Christ,—on belief in the divine spirit in all. Then your heart will be warm enough not to care what men will say of your opinions or your mode of life. You will be very happy. You will have the ceaseless joy of finding people so much better than you imagined, of making people really better by bringing them to know their own good, and giving them hope and faith in God by that

knowledge; of sympathies continually extending and of new lives continually added to yours, so that your soul will widen every day; of greater hopes for man growing greater and more beautiful as you grow older; of an increasing conviction of God's presence and power in men and in yourself, and of the certainty springing from that, of final restoration for mankind. And day by day, to add to your joy, there will increase the number of those who will thank you for new life, and love you so dearly and so faithfully that you will not know what to do with your happiness, except by making it an increased power of making others happy. And, finally, your own religious life will deepen. Living always with God in others, continually finding him in them, and worshipping him there, you will see new phases of his character, and your conception of him will grow nobler and more various. Living always with what you find of righteousness and truth and love in others, you will grow into greater love of these divine Powers. The desire to realize them more fully in your life will change into the power to do so,—for strong desires incessantly searching for and conversant with their objects become powers of those objects,—and at last beholding in all men, in every living spirit, something of God's intellectual and spiritual life, some phase of his love or his beauty or his wisdom or his truth, you will see in yourself and in all, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

See now to what we have been led! Look around you, and in every human soul we behold that God is Spirit. We cannot see one lonely islet of humanity where he

is not, where his light does not shine, round which his love does not break like waves. Wander where we will, in the human spirit, we find him; and, finding him and knowing him everywhere, how can we help adoring him? We worship him in spirit and in truth, and he seeks with delight for our worship.

## THE CHILDHOOD OF GOD.

1875.

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”—LUKE ii., 40.

THE way in which we naturally represent God to ourselves is as a man with the power and wisdom and goodness of a perfect man. It was inevitable that this should be the case in early times among men not capable of abstract thought. We see the same thing working in our children, even in ourselves. In prayer, in thanksgiving, in the going forth of feeling to him, however much our purer reason denies God's visible personality, we represent him to ourselves in human form.

It is a tendency which, indulged in too far, has produced great evils and awakened the strongest opposition. In the present day, scientific study of all kinds, as well as philosophy, have set themselves against any anthropomorphic representation of God. If there be a God, they say, conceive him through nature. I have no objection. In fact, the immense increase of knowledge forces us to reform our intellectual conception of God; and he would be a fool indeed who did not use all means whatever of enlarging and ennobling that conception. Moreover, if we believe in God, all the new knowledge

comes from him, and is intended to reveal more of him to us; and, when we receive it, we take it not only for its own sake, but that we may lead all the ideas we receive from it back to their source, and find them completed and harmonized in our idea of him. All sciences end in theology. Therefore, it is with joy and the kindling hope of reaching higher truths about the Divine that we listen to all that men of science tell us. We know, if they do not, that Nature is the body of God, and that it reveals him as our body; and its organs and their functions reveal our thought. In its myriad-minded work, it discloses the myriad-minded God. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead." We are bound, then, if we would have a worthy theology, to be, if not students of science, at least students of the results of science.

And it is just the same with that part of art which addresses the sense of beauty and its pleasure in Nature. Art, in representation of natural beauty of landscape and of form, has more than doubled the range of its work, both in painting and poetry. Almost the whole natural world has been laid under contribution by art with an intensity and a universality unknown before; and if we are wise, and know our time and our needs, we ought to be able to take all the ideas pertaining to beauty and form which we receive through art concerning Nature, and lead them upwards also to ennoble and enlarge our idea of God.

All, then, that we knew previously of infinite order, of harmony within diversity, of thought as Lord and King

of matter, of beauty as its soul, of infinite evolution, of infinite love brooding in the world of Nature, of ever new weaving and reweaving, forming and reforming, has been indefinitely increased through the new work of science and of art. What is the result, what should be the result, for us who believe in God? We should say with great gratitude, "Our intellectual and imaginative conception of God as pure Thought and pure Beauty has also been indefinitely increased, our whole theology is widened." And this is what science and art have done for us: only in their doing of it we have got rid of the humanity of God, of the conception of his personality.

Is this all we need to know of God? Are we satisfied with a God who contents our intellect and our sense of beauty,—with God conceived as pure Thought through knowledge, or pure Beauty through art? We have certainly got rid of anthropomorphism and of personality; but are we much the better for getting rid of them? Does it give us all we want; or, indeed, is it the highest conception we can form of God to say he is the universe of Nature conceived as Matter, or the universe of Nature conceived as Thought, or the mind of Nature conceived as Harmony and Beauty and impersonal Love?

It seems to me that as many evils follow on the exclusive representation of God as impersonal Thought or Beauty or Love as follow from the exclusive representation of him as having a human personality. What are we to do? This: let us take all the ideas we win from the world of Nature and form out of them part of our conception of God. But the world of Humanity is more important than the world of Nature, and we ought to conceive God also through it: we ought to add to the

thoughts we have won of him from Nature others which we gain through Man, and the first and most natural way of thinking of him is as perfect Manhood. It was that idea that Christ gave to us in a way fitted for the conscience and the spirit. God was our Father in heaven, who was absolutely good, and who loved us utterly and wished us to be as good and as loving as himself, and worked with us for that purpose. God was placed in a human relation to us; and we conceived him, not only as Thought and Beauty, but as a righteous Person and a divine Father, whose Spirit was the source of truth and love and pity and justice. He was made personal, and put into personal, moral, and spiritual relations to us. It was the highest anthropomorphism.

Add, then, to the conception of God we have received from science and art that which we have received from Christ; add, that is, to infinite Thought and Beauty the idea of an infinite Person, with a will, a character, a sense of right, a power of love and truth and justice such as we possess, but freed from sin and infinitely extended, and we possess a conception of God of which we need not be otherwise than justly and nobly proud. Only guard it by remembering always that, in saying that God is personal, we do not mean to say that his personality is the same as ours, but only that there is that power in him by which he can make himself personal in us and for us, and that he is the source of personality such as we conceive it. Infinite Thought, infinite Beauty, infinite Love and Truth and Righteousness, infinite Humanity, infinite Personality, all are his; but they do not fully express him, and to take any one of them and limit our idea of him to that alone is evil



and leads to evil. For we must remember that, if we conceive God as Man exclusively, we are sure to produce as much evil as if we conceive God as Nature exclusively.

Do we not know how evil it is? Theology has taken this idea of God conceived of as a Man, and so exclusively dwelt upon it that it has given birth to all kinds of wrong and idolatrous ideas about God. I need not dwell on the various phases in which this special one-sidedness has appeared. God has been conceived and represented as a kind of Cæsar, a great king and warrior, of irresponsible power, whose will was his only law, and not his will limited by right; whose might made his right; a tyrant and no more. He has been conceived as a great Philosopher alone, or a great Judge alone, or as a great Creator alone, or as a Mechanician, divided from his universe, arranging the whole and leaving details to themselves. And all these ideas, because they stood alone and limited our idea of God, brought forth evils on evils. Take them *all*, take every one you can gain, and they will each modify the other and lead you on to higher ideas. Take one only, and it will corrupt in your hands. This, then, is conclusive. The conception of God through Man is good when it takes into it all the ideas we receive of him from Nature, evil when it does not. The conception of God through Nature is good when it takes into it all the ideas we receive of him through Humanity, evil when it does not. And our whole conception of him ought to be drawn from all that we learn from Nature and all that we learn from Humanity. On that ground, we have almost endless means of expanding our idea of God; and anthropomorphism, instead of degrading or rendering false that

idea, is of the highest use possible in ennobling it and making it more true. Only, as I say, it must be complete. When we frame an idea of God through Man, we must take the whole of Man. Is that done? One instance will occur at once to you of the contrary, which will not only illustrate the evil of limitation of thought in this matter, but also, when corrected, the amazing expansion and ennobling of the idea of God which is given by its correction. Men have conceived God only as masculine, and not feminine. He thinks, feels, acts like a man in their thoughts, never like a woman. The result of this one-sided way of thinking was that all kinds of horrors were connected with his action, and all kinds of wicked feelings attributed to him, in which the conception of Christ also shared. At last, Roman Catholicism invented the Virgin and added her to the Godhead. We cannot do that; but if we want to correct our idea of God, and to ennoble it, one of the first things we have to do is to add to it all the noble characteristics of womanhood. Take the distinct elements which belong to that, and which are for ever different from those that belong to manhood, and, making the necessary abstractions, add them to your growing conception of God. Fix your mind on this, even for one week, and you will be delighted to find how much your conception of God will grow in breadth, in nobility, in completeness,—amazed to find how much you have omitted from it, into how many mutilated, harmful, and even base ideas of him you have fallen by conceiving him through only half of Humanity.

To go still further on the same path, men have conceived God as having the characteristics which belong

to different periods of Man's life. In formative art, in poetry, in the visions of the heart, he has been represented to the imagination of men as a man in the prime of life when they desired to conceive him as fulness of intellect and power, as eternal and strong old age when they wished to conceive him as the fulness of eternal wisdom; and of both these modes we have examples in the Bible. That which the poets and artists have done in this way, we ourselves do continually in our thoughts, as different experiences and trials lead us to imagine God differently; and in this way, in this twofold effort, they and we have certainly developed into greater variety the spiritual and intellectual idea of the Supreme. But one representation of him has been omitted or but very rarely touched; and it is this which I shall lay before you to-day, with all the thoughts connected with it.

I cannot recall any instance in which God has been conceived as the Eternal Child, in which the attributes of such perfect youth and childhood as we can shape in our thought have been added to our idea of the Highest. This we need to do, and this is suggested to us by the childhood of Him who was the express image of the Father.

The first sight we have of God revealed in Man is God revealed in Christ the Child. The second is of God revealed in youth, when, after twelve years, we find the Saviour in the Temple; and, looking up from the Revealer of the Infinite God to the Infinite One himself, we conceive the glorious elements of perfect childhood and perfect youth as existing in him, and we do so with a reverence which takes into itself a great and dear delight.

In that exquisite unconsciousness of self which belongs to childhood, and which adorns it with the beauty of an eternal morning, we recognize one of the elements of the Divine Perfection. Though all his works are known to him from the beginning, yet they are known without any work of the reflective faculty, such as we possess, upon them. They have not been thought out nor thought upon. They are done at once,—thought, act, and will being as one,—no passing from one to the other, no meditation, no sense of the possible or the impossible,—infinite wisdom and power acting as a child acts.

We are wearied with a thousand thoughts and questions. We have to build up our acts in meditation; we ask whether they are right or wrong, wise or foolish, whether they are likely to fail or succeed, whether our motive is selfish or unselfish, whether the end is noble or worth the pains, whether we shall reach an end at all: at every step, we are self-conscious. In the child there is nothing of that. In God there is nothing of it. And with its absence is perpetual blessedness, impossibility of weariness, intensity of life, and I believe the very depth of personality. For by this absence of self-consciousness the child throws itself into the life of all it loves and sees and hears. Things are living to it which are dead to others. It lives in the most wondrous worlds of tale and fancy, and they are real to it; and wholly absorbed in this life other than its own, and loving it with all its heart, it possesses that personal life in its fulness which we want, which we only reach now and then in those rare moments of deep passion, when love of some great thought, or of ideal truth or

beauty, or of man or woman, have made us wholly forget ourselves, and live in the life of the universe or in the lives of men.

This is the essence of God's life,—life in the life of all things and souls which have flowed from him; no single attribute of his being felt or known within himself, but felt and known in that and those whom he has made the outward form of his thought and spirit, so that God's life is that intensity of love which loses self, to speak humanly, in that which it creates and loves.

And that is the deepest root of what we mean by God's personality. It is in those rare moments when we have passed utterly beyond our own circle of self that we feel most a person, most a distinct and living soul. God has that glorious sense of Being at every moment of his infinite existence, never shadowed for an instant by what we should call a return into ourselves, never lost, as we lose it, when, after losing self, self leaps up within us and cries, "Where have you been away from me, how is it you have forgotten me?" Death comes back at the cry, personality seems to slip away from us, we ask again "what we are," we doubt whether we are or are not; in fact, we cease to be: we take up again the weary task of becoming.

These are some of the things which belong to the idea of the Eternal Childhood of God. Intensity of life, depth of personality held in the absence of self-consciousness. Further, do you not see that such a life can have no age, nor ever be older after millions of years have gone by than it was millions of years before? Like the child, it has no past, no future: it abides in an ever-present; it looks neither behind nor before; it has no

memory, no prophecy; it sees all that was and will be at the same moment, and its infinite knowledge makes it forever young. Yes, it seems to me that if, after long searching, it were once granted to mortal eyes to see in a vision, in that solemn dreamland into which we enter once or twice in life, that form which God might afford us as a symbol of himself, we should see a child, with the awful light of eternity within its eyes and the smile of unfathomable joy upon its lips.

For this idea we add also to our conception of God from childhood,—that there is eternal rapture in his Being. Our thoughts of God are solemn, sublime, tinged often with a certain gloom of solitude: we unconsciously link to our thought of his ceaseless work some vain touch of weariness, some sense of struggle. It is wise, then, to turn to the thought of this eternal youth, which is renewed forever in making all things ever new; which sees all things as childhood sees them, with the dew of morning on them, without a shade of languor or satiety; which finds in the never-ending creation of new things in thought, and in that which men call matter, never-ending rapture,—that matchless, radiant rapture which we know the shadow of when we create. It is only God whose pleasure has never been dimmed by a sense of incompleteness in things thought and done; whose delight is endless, because each thing he gives birth to is intensely loved by him,—him the Eternal Poet, whose poem is, for us, Nature and Human-kind,—him who rejoices forever like a child.

Add to this, and from childhood also,—into whose face we look and catch the vision of innocence,—unutterable, self-delighting Goodness; not goodness won, as ours is,

by struggle, and bearing on it the stains of sorrow, but goodness, spontaneous, necessary, from everlasting to everlasting; goodness to which evil is non-existent, which knows not and cannot know evil, which does not contend with that which we call evil, but sees it as the shadow which goodness casts in an imperfect nature, a shadow which must pass away when that nature is made perfect,—a goodness, therefore, which has all the exquisite joy of innocence without its ignorance,—all its naturalness of life without its foolishness, and without its dulness.

These are some of the thoughts of God we win when we think of him as the Eternal Child. And these thoughts ought to be dear to us, for so we add charm and joy and rapture, and a wonderful hope of glorious youth to come, and the feeling of the heart when of a dewy morning we walk out in new-born spring, to our religion and our life with God. Solemn, grave, and stately with many sorrows is our life with the Eternal One, when we sit surrounded by long years of trial, sin, struggle, painful victory, in the chambers of our own heart, looking wearily forward to the long years to come in which day by day we shall renew the battle and set our face steadfastly to our Jerusalem with Christ. Within ourselves, within our memories, our hopes, and fears, we seem to worship a God whose first-born is sorrow and whose law is trial, even to the breaking of all but the last cord of the heart. It seems as if we were saved only, so as by fire, in the supreme agony of being when it asserts its immortality against the phantom Death. It is thus looks our religion, our life and worship, when we find our God only within the circle of

our own experience. Pass out of that experience now and then, see God without the sphere of the thoughts of manhood, womanhood, and age, and as within the sphere of eternal youth, eternal childhood,—worship him not only as the Lord who heals sorrow and forgives sin, and brings you back from wandering, but as the ever joyful, ever young Delight, whose life is rapture because his life is unconscious Love. That will take you somewhat out of yourself, make small your sorrows, dip in forgetfulness your sins, fill your lips with praise, and put a new song in your heart. It makes life happier to consciously conceive and worship the Eternal Happiness. It takes away the curse of time to know and love for his beauty the Eternal Youth. It refreshes, as with the cool rain of the even, the languid meadows of later life, where every blade of grass is a thought and every flower a feeling, when we realize, in an hour of divine inspiration, that there abides for us an eternal childhood in the Eternal Childhood of God.

Lastly, see how much that does for you, how much beauty and largeness it adds to your thought of him you worship. Take the method and do the same kind of work for every period of the life of manhood and womanhood, and your thought of God will grow in grandeur and in breadth. Pass from the characters of ordinary human life to those of the lives of great and inspired men and women, persons of genius and power and keen feeling and matchless love and victorious holiness and piercing truth,—the prophets and poets and philosophers and teachers and healers and saviours of the race,—and collect into one thought all the elements in them which are highest; pass from individuals to



nations, and collect into your thought of one Being all the ideas in their world-wide development which the national life of all nations has wrought out at large and handed down to us; pass from nations to the whole of the human race, see it in its entirety, grasp and conceive the ideas and feelings which rule it in their most universal form; expand them, idealize them into perfection, and, when you have done all in this ascending series, add them to your conception of God. Have you then conceived him as he is? No! no! but you have wonderfully enlarged and ennobled your thought of him.

Can you go further still? Oh, certainly. Take the whole of Nature and all the knowledge you have gained of it; see it in its infinite detail, then generalize into a few great ideas all that you have learned from the detail; pass beyond this earth into the infinite worlds of space,—beyond the flaming walls; weary imagination with the thoughts which are born in you, as you pierce into the ineffable silence and darkness of the spaces beyond our star-cluster where other star-clusters float,—and add all the ideas you then conceive to your conception of God. Do more; people all these worlds with living spirits, different no doubt from us, but all at least the same in this, that all think and all love. Imagine the countless myriads of spirits which live, and all have their source and their end, their thought and their love, of God and by him and through him, and have you found him yet? No, not so as to exhaust him. But you have indefinitely enlarged and ennobled your conception, and you know that he whom you worship is worthy of your worship.

Then are you at rest. Not because you have done

all, not because your conception has attained finality, but because you have formed as adequate an idea of God as is possible to you, and you know that it will continue to expand. Every new extension of knowledge, every new secret science wrests from Nature, every new idea wrought into form through the progress of man, every new representation of beauty that art makes, every new development of human feeling and work in every sphere of human activity, will swell and dignify your conception of the divine and universal One who is also your Father. Till at last you will know, in that vivid way in which one does know spiritual truth, that such thought and such growth of thought about God will be immortal, and form the ground of your immortality. It cannot be that this mighty Idea, in me, in all my fellow-men, once we have possession of it, should die in us; infinitely worthy in itself, it makes those who have it infinitely worthy. The thought is by itself eternal, and guarantees eternity to those who think it. In itself, by its essence, it is immortal. I who think it am immortal. It is in God, who lives forever. I who think it am also in God forever.

## THE LIGHT OF GOD IN MAN.

1876.

“That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—*JOHN* i., 9.

THESE words were written many years after Christ had left the earth, and they were written expressly from the spiritual point of view. That is, they refer to the inward light of Christ's spirit in men's hearts, not to the outward light which he manifested through his earthly life. The light is the divine indwelling of Christ's spirit in the soul. It belongs, we are told, to every man that cometh into the world. It is not given at random or by favoritism, as some decide: it is not given at baptism, and not without baptism: it is not given through man or man's ordinances. All these and similar statements are added to the Scriptures. It is simply, we are told, the light in every man that is born,—God's light in us, the uncreated fountain of all that is true and good and beautiful and kind.

When we grasp a truth, and the exquisite pleasure of knowing what is true abides with us like a noble guest; when we conquer a selfish or worldly desire, and lie down to rest on the goodness we have won, and feel at peace; when in the golden summer time we pass

through the happy woodland, and hear the stream and the trees talk to one another, and the beauty that flows into the eyes and ears kindles its instructive fire in our hearts; when we give love or pity or kindness to those that need it, and the quick thrill of heavenly joy, such as the shepherd feels when he finds his lost sheep, swells the heart,—what is it that we feel? We feel not only ourselves, but God within us. His is the truth, the goodness, his the beauty and the tenderness, and his the joy. He is mingled with us then. His light and life make our light and our life.

And it matters but little as to our possession of this, whether we be poor or rich, learned or unlearned, commonplace or filled with genius. It is true it is more or less in all men, it is of different kinds in different men; but it shines in all. One may hold it in a soul which is a palace for the crowned Truth to dwell in; another may keep it in a soul which is a ruined cabin, where many an outlawed thought and many a felon feeling dwells. But its eternal fire burns in both,—in one as brightly as the sun, in the other dimly as in a dying star. None are without the Spirit of God. We live and move and have our being because he is in us. There is no true life, no true thought, no true feeling of which he is not the source and essence. Therefore, we know whence we are, and what we are, and whither we are tending. We are from God, we are of God, and we are going on to deeper union with him. Therefore, we know whether we are mortal or immortal. As he has wrought himself up with us, we cannot die. We are a vital part of his eternal Being.

When we say these things, we assume the Being

of God and our being in him. We start our whole thought and reasoning and feeling on the subject of what we are from the belief in God. And we think that our own being and that of Nature, and all the phenomena of both, are better explained, and that more of their facts are explained and correlated by that theory than by any other.

But there are others who hold a different theory, and who, desiring to explain and find out what Man is, start from Man himself. There are two classes of these persons, and they differ widely.

One is the speculative. They have the poetical, and not the practical, disposition. They long for light, not on the facts of matter, but on those of thought and feeling. "What is the end," they say, "and what the source of all I imagine in my brain and heart? Ideas rise within me, and passionate emotions thrill me. I love them and pursue them, I win and exhaust their good and joy, then they decay and fail. Are they then of the dust,—the dust to which my body shall return? I would fain think not. I hear of a God who made me, of a heaven and a hell in future; but I know only myself and the earth, and that I suffer and rejoice in the present."

Then they send their soul wandering into the invisible to search for an answer; and it comes back after long speculation, bearing no olive-branch, but silent and weary, with no reply upon its lips, and they take it in and say: "Alas! there is no voice, no light. I, and only I, am the centre of the universe. I myself am God and Heaven and Hell. God is the name I use when I think upon my Fate. Heaven is the image I make to myself of my fulfilled desire. Hell is the

image I create of my desire, when, powerless to fulfil itself, it still goes on craving and consuming. There is no reality beyond myself that answers to these names. They are but pictures in the dark looking-glass into which I gaze when I look outside of myself. I see in it, it seems, infinite depths, and far, far away in them dim shadows seem to move. But the mirror is only a thin surface of my own creation, in which my own self is reflected. Itself and its shadows and its depths are all my phantasy. And, when I die, the glass is shattered and the images. It is nothing, it tells me nothing, beyond it there is nothing. I have come wandering into this world I know not why, nor whence. All day long I ask what I am and whither I am going, and, when (driven by the desolateness of old age and the torment of decay) I am asking it most bitterly, I am suddenly struck down — and all is over.

“‘ A moment’s halt, a momentary taste  
Of Being from the well amid the waste ;  
And lo ! the phantom caravan has reached —  
The Nothing it set out from. Oh, make haste !’

It is ghastly ignorance, and it were well I could cease to torment myself about it. But I cannot. I cannot help asking. An inward passion urges me, and it finds its food in everything. Never for one moment am I moved by a great thought or touched by a deep feeling, without this greater and deeper question rising and appealing to me for a reply.”

Is there an answer? Well, we Christians say there is, and we find it in the life and words of Christ. If he is the representative and ideal of Humanity, and if what he

said of himself as such be true, then these questions *are* answered. The very kernel of the Incarnation is that God and Man are at one in Christ, and Christ himself said that what he was his brothers were to be,—at one with God. It was as Man and as one of us that he said, “I and my Father are one.” It was as one of us that he said, “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” It was as the ideal Man he said, “The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth these also doeth the Son likewise”; it was as such he said, “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works”; and, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” It was as man he said, “I must work the works of him that sent me.”

If these things be true of us men as they were true, Christ said, of himself, then all your questions are answered. Whence came you? You came out from the Father. Why are you here? To work the works of him that sent you. What are you? You are a living child of God, one with God, so dwelt in by him that your works are his and your doctrine his. Whither are you going? You leave the world, and go to the Father.

You answer, What right have I to claim for myself to be that which Christ was? I reply: You have the right he has given you, the right God has given you through him. You are not now wholly what he was: you are imperfect, sinful, struggling against error and temptation; but, still, you are at one with Christ, by right and through him at one with God; and by and by, when you are wholly redeemed and clean, you shall be in fact that which you are now by right. That is what Christ says

himself. He had no doubt that *what* he was as Man all men who followed him should be. "The glory which thou gavest me"—so he speaks, praying to his Father—"I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

The certainty of that is the revelation of Pentecost. The very Spirit of God dwells in the soul of man and is his life: he is the light that lighteth every man. Believe that truth, and all your life will change. You will not need to send your soul into the infinite to find God. You will find him in your heart; and, finding him, you will know, far more certainly than you know any fact of matter, whence you are and what you are and whither you are going. Weary speculation will cease, fruitless effort will become fruitful work: all you think and do will have an aim, and you will know you shall reach your aim. And when, at death, you stand on the peak of the mount of life, and earth lies beneath you, sleeping in the mist, you shall look up to a radiant Heaven, and cry, stretching forth your hands in utter thankfulness and joy, "I leave the world and go to the Father, my Father, to be at one with him forever, with the light that lighted me when I came into the world."

That, then, is the answer which the Spirit of God in Christ gives to the souls that cannot as yet believe, but must speculate on life and death and eternity. They are speculations that have in them imagination and poetry. They stir the emotions of those who make them. They are prompted by passionate thought, and they kindle it. They bring with them longing which lifts a man above the world, and often indignation against God which, in



the stirring it gives the soul, has a reflex action toward good upon it. For it is an indignation which soon changes into love of God, when the idea of God is changed. At least, they keep the man from sinking into a mere intellectual machine: they remove him from the drudgery into which the desire of nothing else but what is called practical brings its followers at last.

But there is another class of men to-day, who do not speculate at all. They do not send their souls out from themselves, for they do not believe in anything like a soul. "We cannot hold it in our hand," they say, "nor prove that spirit is by reasoning." They hear of a Divine Light and Life and Spirit in them, whom men call God; and they say that they do not feel it, and do not care to feel it. They will not speculate on subjects to which they see no end, and of which they know no beginning. The feelings on such subjects are blind guides, and they dim the dry light in which they wish to work. They allow the existence of conscience as now felt, they allow the existence of the religious feeling in man, of love and aspiration and desire for continued life; but they do not allow that these are spiritual powers that have an existence of their own, derived to us from a Spirit who loves us and gave us being. They stick to facts, as they say; and the only way to find what men call the soul, and the feelings it is said to possess, is to look for them in the vessels and the nerves and the matter of the brain, and in the movements of their atoms, and they grope for them in the decay of the dissecting-room and in the tortured tissues of animals. "We have not found the soul," they cry: "it is not there."

No, indeed it is not; and you will never find it there.

Life is not found in death: you will not touch the incorruptible in the corruptible. You may find movements correlative with thought, but not the moving power of thought,—movements correlative with the desire of God, but not the source of the movements or of the desire. Never, never will you find that in the ceaseless clash of atoms.

Then, as to conscience and the sense of religion and belief in immortality, they must be sought at their origin in animals, and in their slow growth through selected movements of matter which become habitual and hereditary. There, in the far past and in their weakest developments, we shall find out what conscience and religion and intellect and love truly are. And these men have made their theories, and they are not pleasant ones. But whether they are pleasant does not much matter, if they accounted for the facts. But it is safe to say that at present they do not explain conscience or genius or the love of a cause or even the love of man and woman.

And we who look on ask, with some wonder, whether it would not be a more rational method of finding out what conscience and genius and love are in men, if we were to study them in their most perfect and highest form rather than in their imperfect and lowest. No one denies that they have developed from faint origins, but their origins will be better known, if we begin to study them from what they are now.

Look at conscience as it rises in Luther, when he stood alone against the world of his time, and clung to truth in the face of death. Look at genius, when it speaks in Shakespeare's tragedy, when it fills the heart in a master's music. Look at love, when in Christ it sacrifices the

whole of life for the sake of the vast conception of bringing the whole race to God ; look at love even in yourself, when you are thrilled with the beauty of the world, when you feel that you would gladly die for the maiden of your choice: and then ask yourself if you can conceive these things to be only the product of the weaving or the clash of atoms,—if they have come to this height and power and majesty and immortality, to this oneness with a beauty and a truth which you are forced to conceive as higher than they, by the slow selection of advantageous atomic movements.

It is when most distressed with the noise of those who bray the love and thought and conscience of men in the mortar of their analysis that in a pause of their unmusical toil we hear with exquisite delight these ancient words: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” For at least the truth in them is an adequate cause for the results we observe. It accounts for the vast phenomena of the moral, spiritual, imaginative, and passionate elements in man. The other theory does not account for them, is utterly inadequate to the facts.

Conscience is not the growth of human judgments alone: it is the voice of an Eternal Right within us, which comes to us from a living Righteousness without us. Its source in Eternal Right is beyond Humanity: it is throned in the Being of God forever. When we have put aside some wrong with a mighty effort, and feel, after the first agony, the high sense of noble conquest, the deep joy within us is not only that we have won our own approval: it is the joy of being

nearer to the eternal Goodness who loves us, of feeling that he himself has wrought with us in the conquest. When we are conscious of the strong bitterness of remorse, it is not only that we have sinned against man that tortures us: it is that we have exiled ourselves for a time from the Father of our spirits. "O, cleanse thou me," we say, "from my secret faults." "Father, I have sinned against thee." And in that conviction lies our truest chance of repentance, our best ground for repairing the evil we have wrought against our fellow-man.

Genius is not the happy conjuncture of material elements in a man. It is the breath of the intellect of God, the thrill of God's heart in us, the inspiration of his beauty. When the poet creates, it is the creative Spirit of God that breathes into the men and women whom he makes, and bids them live and love. When the artist paints, the soul in his picture that speaks to us is the living beauty and love of God. When the musician makes the heart paint a hundred images of man and Nature, and gives to each image its own troop of emotions, it is the changing, feeling Spirit of God that changes and feels within us.

Love is not the pleasant thrill of atomic movements, repeated till they become fixed in a certain direction. Love is God himself in us, as the desire of good. It is the longing after pure happiness in others. It is the desire of beauty, in God, in Nature, in man or woman. It is the generative, productive, creative power in us. Its power is itself the Word of God in us; and we may truly say of it, in all its noble forms in us, what John said of the perfect love of God, "All things are made

by it, and without it is not anything made that is made." For God is love, and where it is true in us it is God in us. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Yes, these things are true; and it is great joy to know and feel that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. For then we know these things shall not die. The right we struggled for and won is not lost in the grave. It is ours in God, a treasure laid up for us in the righteous world. The beauty and intellect and noble passion which genius threw into form do not decay with our dust, and enter into the unconscious being of the rocks and trees. They abide and grow forever in us and for us, adding beauty to beauty, thought to thought, feeling to feeling, and are expressed forever in more and more perfect form. And Love is above all immortal. Our childish love of God, the early praise of joy we gave him, our later desire of good, our longing to know his peace,—this does not die. God, who is its life, has made it move in us, keeps it in our hearts from dying, touches us through it into effort, and leads us by it at last to fulfil our true life in unbroken love of him. Nor does our human love die. It has its defect and its excess, its glory and its folly, its constancy and its failure: the subjects of it may lose their hold on us, but all that has been nobly felt and truly thought in it endures; and it will purify itself in us, and we shall know by and by that it was of God.

Nor does death divide us from love, or from the pity, the passion, the forgiveness which we have to give or to receive, the longing for, or the peace of finding those

who have gone away. For God's Spirit is in the living heart that waits for us, and in ours; and its unity makes our unity. The light in which those who have gone away abide is the same that abides in our hearts, and that light is the light of love. Oh, desolate indeed is he who in the hour of some wild sorrow, when life crashes round him, and earth has nothing left to give, has no belief in hearts that wait for him in a kinder and more peaceful world, who sees nothing in the dead but dust, who looks for the heart that beat for him, and the eyes that he gazed into to find comfort, and the hand that made his support, only in the grass that waves above the grave or the wind that hurries by that haunted resting-place. But there is some joy even in bitter pain, some comfort which we know will arise ere long and sit with us hand in hand, when we think that the all-indwelling spirit of God's Love moves in us, and in the husband, the wife, the children, the brothers, sisters, and friends that have passed beyond the grave.

These, then, are some of the human aspects which the revelation of to-day presents to our hearts, weary with speculation, still more weary of the claim of science — of some science at least — to rob us of our hopes, to paralyze our faith in the immortality of the heart, the conscience, and the intellect.

If, then, these things be true, — if there be a spirit of goodness, of genius, and of love; if that spirit be God's Spirit, and he abide in us, our true and faithful Light in this dark world of sorrow, failure, and decay, — what is, what ought to be, our daily life and effort? It is to walk worthy of him who dwells in us, to resist his effort in us no longer, to throw ourselves into union with his righteousness, his ideas, and his love.

What are they? What do we know of God's goodness, his thoughts, his love? We know them through the life and work of Christ our Saviour. The Spirit in us is the same Spirit that was in him, and the work the Spirit does in us is to awake in us the remembrance and the imitation of Christ. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have done unto you."

The Goodness we are to pursue and make our own is the goodness of Christ, the same fair human goodness that breathed and inspired, labored and endured in the Holy Land, that since then has lived in all the good and pure of earth. It was a very simple goodness: no one can mistake it; the poorest and most ignorant may understand and follow it. It was loving-kindness and sweet gentleness, and the healing of sickness and sorrow; it was purity of heart and belief in the goodness of men; it was truth, and such love of truth as the world has not seen again; it was the giving of truth to all; it was the glad acknowledgment of truth wherever he found it; it was the abiding of all his life in his Father, so that his thoughts were his Father's thoughts, his work and his whole being God's work and being; it was unbroken communion with Divine Righteousness, and the unbroken effort to make the communion he possessed with God the possession of men. There, I say, is our ideal. That is what the inward Light in us is striving to accomplish in us.

And in intellect, genius, the work of thought, what does God's Spirit in us mean for us? The answer is also in his life who has given us the Spirit. What was the work of his genius? It was not the pandering to a

popular cry, not the astonishing of the world, not the desire of applause, not the sacrifice of gifts to the winning of money, not the solitary pleasure of increasing knowledge or of refining feeling. It was the firm conceiving of great ideas, useful for the human race; it was the shaping and rounding of these into instruments that men could use for the advance and saving of the world; it was the entirely faithful and resolute working out of these in life, it was death for them at last; it was belief in their immortality and joy, in their resurrection in men and nations, that had seemed to lose them, in their eternal abiding in men by his Spirit.

It was not only the conceiving of thoughts, but the creating of men. Christ made new men by the power of intellect. He used, that is, all the power thought gave him for the purpose of making useless and dead characters into living and useful ones. He was the artist of men. He saw what their intellect, feeling, powers, and senses could become. He saw the work they were capable of, and his art-work was to bring men to the ideal God had of them. It was true creation, and no phrase is truer than this: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Or this, which more fully expresses the thought: "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

That is the work of his spirit in us, and that should be our work among men. Whatever thought or power of thought God has given us should first of all be given to these two things,—the conceiving of ideas useful for the true progress of man, and the work of bringing those we meet up to the ideal that God has of them, the creation of new men.



And, lastly, what is the love which the Spirit calls on us to have and to live by? That is contained in a few words of Christ: "Love one another as I have loved you." It is no longer the statement of the old law, "Love your neighbor as yourself": it is "Love your neighbor as Christ loved you,"—that is, far, far more than yourself, more than your joy, more than your peace, more than your wealth, more than your knowledge, more than your hopes, more than your life. Die for the sake of others. What can be added to that? It is that and nothing else that God's Spirit asks of you. But it is not without its reward,—not a selfish reward, not the wild happiness of earth, not anything which will make you love yourself. It is the reward, or, rather, not the reward, but the necessary fruit of the seed you sow. It is union with the life of God, union with immortal love. It is to be at one with the spirit of the love which says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; it is to be able through love to lose yourself in living union with all that has beauty in Nature, with all that has nobleness in man, with the whole universe of God, with God himself. Oh, what life shall then be ours,—life which, in losing self, finds itself in union with the ever-beating Life which makes, as it beats with love, the whole creation! And what light! At last, the light within us, hidden now, and dimmed too often by our sin and failure, shall become the light in which our whole being shines and lives. The Sun of Righteousness, the Sun of intellectual Truth, the Sun of perfect Love,—these three will mix their glory into one, and in it we shall abide,—conscience, mind, and heart illuminated and illuminating, eternal light our own, for God is ours forever.

## THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1876.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” —  
REVELATION xxii., 21.

IT is the last text in the Bible, and it fits well the last day of the year. It is well we should take a blessing to ourselves, or at least try to fancy that it may be ours, for we need it sorely on this day. It may have been a year of happiness to some of you, and I would gladly think so; for, in the troublesome world in which we live, the best happiness possible to us is to know that happiness is a reality. And those of you whom God has made happy, and who have been worthy of your happiness, ought to be very thankful to him, and should cherish the memory of your happiness and lay it by in a treasure chamber, that, when the evil days come, you may look at it and say, “Then, I had joy, and I can taste its sweetness still: I have failed, but my past delight receives me into an everlasting habitation.” Therefore, be grateful for your joy, and keep it well. It has been a blessing; but, though you have been blest, you will be none the worse for a heavenly blessing such as I lay to your hearts to-day out of this sacred book. For surely all earthly bliss is made more beautiful if we can link it to the grace of the Lord Jesus.

It may have been a year of misery to some of you. You may have lost out of your life one who made all its delight and all its interest, whose sharing in your work made that work worth doing, whose sharing in your life lifted it above dull commonplace, in whom were hid years of associated and loving memory. And now your work is done only because it is duty, and your life lived only because it is cowardly to die. Or it may not be loss of love, but loss of your best self that has made the year a misery. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself? It is a greater misery even than loss of one whom we have loved, to look back and feel that in the months gone by some quality, some hope, some belief, has been lost out of the character which can never be restored to it. Something else may be gained in the future, but not *that*: something better may be gained, but your old companion, which made you so happy or so good, is dead. Again and again in life, irreparable losses take place. The door is shut, and its clang-to sounds like the voice of doom itself.

While, then, you are shut out in the darkness, and before another door opens, beyond which you may find a new light, and gain a new power in yourself which will give energy to life and fulness to character, your time is a time of misery. It will be well for you who are now suffering this, to whom this year closes in that pain, if you have the heart or the right to think upon this blessing. Some of you may do so even now; and the grace of Christ may be already giving you, through its tender influence, the power to lead a new life. Oh, throw your whole soul into union with it, and seek the blessedness of a life with him! Others may feel that as yet they have

neither part nor lot with him, that they have no right to his gracious kindness, or they may be too storm-tossed in their hearts to be able to realize that peace can ever come again. I bid them not despair. There is only one irremediable sin. It is the sin of Judas. It is despair of forgiveness. Despair of forgiveness! It is irrational. For how much do we forgive; and shall not God, who is greater than we, forgive more than we do? Take the blessing even with all but a hopeless soul. Lay it like healing dew on your heart, and ere long it will do its work.

But, after all, most of you, as you look back, do not see unmixed joy or unmixed sorrow in the year so nearly gone. Life is, for the most part, a varied web. It is woven of glow and gloom, thunder purple and shining gold. Even in the midst of our darkest days, deep joy rushed in; even that which we now most sorrow for had in it, when we lived in it, inexplicable pleasure. Often, as we look back, that which was our happiness in hours gone by—so strangely mixed is life—is now our tragedy, and that which was our tragedy is now our blessedness. And, on the whole, the greater number of us have more joy than sorrow, though in the weight of sorrow we forget the multitude of joy. For sorrows keep together, while joys are dispersed through life, and in the centre of sorrow we cannot recall the joys that are scattered all over the circle of life. Think a little less of your sorrows and more of your joys on this day. For the joys will make you grateful, and gratitude is in itself one of the most beautiful pleasures of the soul. And, being grateful, you can take this blessing to yourself and make it yours; for part of the grace of the Lord Jesus is to have a grateful heart.

It is well, then, this day to seek a blessing. For, indeed, unless one is very young and very strong, and little worn by life, we need some blessing. Dwell as we will on the brighter side of things, life is very hard, and men and women are hard on one another, and we ourselves are growing hard, and that is the worst of all. We need something to soften, in no enfeebling way, the hardness of life and of men and of our own heart. And most of the blessings we seek of our own will weaken our souls, and in the weakening make us harder in the future. But the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, if we could win it and take it, softens all things by making us stronger toward goodness and truth, and righteousness and love.

What is it? What is his grace? That is our study to-day. Whatever it is, it does not come from one who is ignorant of all we need. He has known to the full the weight of human suffering, and the blessing of his grace that is with us is brought home to us by that knowledge. He can comfort because he knows. He has known what temptation is, and can feel with the agony of our resistance, and through that with our weakness. He has *not* known remorse or the loss of good; but, through his infinite pain in contact with sin, and his infinite pity for those enthralled by it, he can understand our unhappiness in guilt. By knowledge of sorrow, he can bring blessing to sorrow.

Nor has he known joy less. In early life, as boy and youth, he knew all our simple and pure joys. In manhood, when he first went out to the world, we have often traced the joy of enthusiasm in his work. In later days, these only lived in memory; but another joy took their place,—the mighty joy of universal love, the

joy of giving up all things for all men,—that wonderful and mystic joy which we faintly realize whenever, out of the depths of personal suffering, we rise into the glorious life of self-surrender because we love. In that joy of Christ's, all suffering died; and he who reached thus the uttermost human joy can, through knowledge of it, give us the blessing of joy. But his fitness to give comes not only of knowledge of our need, but also of his victory over all that is evil or weak in our need. He overcame, through holy will and through love of others, sorrow, temptation, and sin, went through their depths and came forth their conqueror. It is the Victor who can give grace and strength to those whom the same foes attack. That gift is not in the victim's power. He who lets himself be enslaved by the pains of life, he who allows sorrow or sin to make him effortless, can never give or do good to others. No more than a coward can inspire the war can he inspire or help his fellowmen, and that is his worst punishment and his worst degradation. Christ can give inspiration, can bless, and give of his power because he mastered the evil forces of life. None have ever done that so completely, but many can do it in his spirit. And those who do can help and bless their fellows in proportion to their victory. Remember that this day, you who are in warfare with pain or guilt. You will be able to bring grace and blessing to others in the future, whatever your pain be now, if you conquer it. And, in order to conquer, win his grace who has conquered, and who will give it to you.

That grace is, first, kindness, the good-will of love. It is usual to speak of the grace of Christ as a spiritual gift

which is communicated to us, as the favor and good-will which he bestows. But though that way of looking at the term "the grace of Christ" is true enough, yet it forgets, or keeps out of sight, the fact that, to give it, he must have it; and the first thing at least we are to look to, and the thing which is usually left out, is the grace of Jesus Christ himself. It was his own before it is ours. The first meaning of the words then is "the loving-kindness which belonged to Christ, which formed part of his character, be with you, and form part of yours." And that is a much more practical way of talking, and more to be understood, than speaking of a kind of vague supernatural gift the exact sense of which we cannot understand.

What that loving-kindness, that grace, was, lies before you in his life. It is old, simple, gracious human love raised to its greatest height and tenderness. It is the showing forth of all those sweet and beautiful qualities which make home and social life so dear, and the showing forth of them in perfection. It is the filial tenderness which laid down the consciousness of genius and all its impulses for thirty years at the feet of his mother in a quiet and silent life, and which won her pondering and passionate love. It is the penetrating love which saw into the character of his friends, and made them believe in their own capacity for greatness, which led men like Peter and John and James to find out and love one another, which bound his followers together in a love that outlasted death. It is the tender insight which saw into the publican's heart, which, when the sinner drew near in tears, believed in her repentance and exalted her into a saint, which had compassion on the multitude and on

the weariness of a few, which wept over Jerusalem and over Lazarus, which never failed to strike the right chord even with souls so ignorant as the woman of Samaria, which in all human life and the movement of its passions and hopes and faiths did, said, and thought the loving and just thing at the right moment, without doing or saying the weak thing. Think of it all, you who know the story; and an image of the grace of Christ as loving-kindness will grow before your soul. And it will be strange if you do not, ravished with the sight, say: "Let that blessed power be mine in life. May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with me." It is no theological mystery which you ask for then: you ask that he may give you his strong and tender human love; you ask not that he may give you something new, but that he may strengthen and ennoble all that you know is most beautiful in your nature and most likely to make you beautiful toward your fellow-men. It is a blessed thing to ask for and to live for in the coming year, for it will make your life a blessing.

But there is more in it than this. Human love, left alone, spends itself only on those near to us, or on those that love us in return, and, in its form of kindness and pity, on these whom we compassionate. Kept within a narrow circle, it tends to have family or a social selfishness. Given only to those who suffer, it tends to become self-satisfied. To be perfect, it ought to reach, through frank forgiveness, those who injure us; through interest in the interests, ideas, and movements of human progress, those who are beyond our own circle, in our nation, nay, even in the world; and finally all men, those even who are our bitterest foes, through desire that they should have good and be good.



It was the very glory of the grace of Christ, as love, that it rose into this wonderful height and universality. No act for his truest friend or mother was more intense in feeling than that act in which he laid down his life for his enemies. No love for John or Peter was greater than the love which devoted his whole life to the salvation of the world, of men of whom he knew nothing personally. There was, then, a motive power behind his natural human love, which lifted it into a diviner region, which made it Godlike in forgiveness, Godlike in its rush out of the particular into the universal. What was that motive? If we can find it, we shall know the very root and inspiration of the grace of Christ. It is easy to find. It is written in everything he said, but nowhere is it written more clearly than in the first words of his Prayer. When he taught us to pray "Our Father," he told us that it was his conviction that all men were children of God, and that necessarily all were brothers one of another. It was easy for him to forgive a brother, even were he an enemy. It was easy for him to die for unknown men, if they were brothers. Christ felt it to be an utterly beautiful and joyful thing to love the sons of God,—the sons of him from whom he drew his mission, to whom he owed his love, from whom came all the souls for whom he died. All men were infinitely precious and divine in Christ's sight, for he saw them all consciously and unconsciously going into the outstretched arms of God. Therefore, he could not help loving them all.

That is the grace of Christ,—the loving-kindness of Jesus,—the human love raised into the divine without losing one touch of its humanity, save only as light is

lost in greater light. I pray that this grace of Christ be with you all,—the grace of natural love lifted into divine and universal love through faith in the Fatherhood of God. It is Christ's to give because he had it, and when we have it we can give it also. Gain it and give it, and you will be blessed and a blessing.

Secondly, grace has another meaning other than loving-kindness. It means the kind of beauty we express by the word "charm"; and in this sense we may translate the text, "The beautiful charm of Christ be with you all." It is the sense in which a Greek would have loved to take the words, and they truly bear that meaning. What was that charm? It was that of harmony of character, the musical subordination and accord of all the qualities and powers of his nature, so that the whole impression made was one of exquisite and various order in lovely and living movement. It is owing to this that of all the images of history none is so unique and clear and attractive as that of Christ. Its grace in this sense is perfect, and that is its inner spirit.

In outward action, it showed itself in many delicate and lovely ways. Its loveliest form is in sensitiveness to feeling,—the sensitiveness we find in all his ways with men and women. Do you remember how, when the world-worn Pharisee expressed his scorn of the sinful woman, Christ felt her boundless love, and said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much"; how, when Mary sat at his feet and was blamed by Martha, he alone saw love and rightness of choice in her silence; how, when the rude utilitarian saw waste in the extravagant love which lavished on him the precious spikenard, he accepted it, not for its extravagance, but

for its passion; how, when Peter had sinned by a three-fold treachery, he believed in the repentance, and only gave one look of sore and loving reproach; how, when he was dying, he provided for his friend a mother, and for his mother a son? What charm, what grace in them all! And their beauty could not stand alone. That kind of exquisite sensitiveness flowered through the whole of his life with men. It was his grace, and all felt its charm.

Nor is it less seen in his speech than in his act. It is impossible always to explain in what perfect literary charm consists; but one thing is always true,—it is the voice of an inward harmony of character. It is rarely found in its perfection, but it is nowhere found so exquisitely as in the stories and words of Christ. In directness, in temperance, in a certain sweet wisdom and ordered humanity, and in the beauty that results from these, there is nothing in the loveliest Greek work which matches the parables of Christ, or such sayings as, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”; or, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” The charm of them is perfect. Do you not know that, had Christ been born when Pericles was master at Athens, every Athenian would have clustered round him to hear his words, for the very beauty of them? Sophocles and Socrates would have felt their *grace*.

In thinking of him as the Man of Sorrows, in having imposed on us by the ascetic that he had no form or comeliness, we forget what must have been his irresist-

ible charm. In the reaction which Christendom felt from that heathen worship of beauty which ended in moral deformity, nay, linked beauty to sensualism, the loveliness of Christ was too long hidden from us: we lost the sense of his grace in the meaning which the nobler Greek would have given to the term.

Do not you forget it. Seek the blessing of the charm that comes of sensitiveness to the feelings of others, of sensitiveness to all that is beautiful, of an inward harmony of nature, and of the expression of that harmony in beautiful act and speech. Say to yourselves in this sense also, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with me and all."

And, if we are worthy of it and see it, he will give it to us. It is given, indeed, through our seeing it. The moment we see loveliness, we cannot help desiring it; and the moment we desire it, we begin our effort after it. To do this is one of the instinctive passions of our nature. We wish to be like that which we admire, and we no sooner wish for and admire it than we grow like to it. And the more like we grow to the beautiful thing, the more we desire to be more fully at one with it, till out of our love of beauty arises an endless aspiration and a pressure toward perfection which we cannot conceive otherwise than eternal. It is by being beautiful that Christ gives us of his beauty, and makes us into his image. It is in quite a natural, and not a supernatural manner that we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

But this is not all, and it needs guarding. So far as we have touched this meaning of the grace of Christ, it is in the manner of his ways and the form of his speech

alone. It is true these outward things sprang out of a beautiful spirit; but to fix our eyes only upon them is to become a worshipper of beauty as such, to have only an imaginative love for him. And I am not sure that the result of that, kept alone, would not be evil. All worship of beauty for itself alone has two main evils, and the merely imaginative worship of Christ is just as likely to lead to them as the worship of the idea of beauty. They are, first, absolute revolt from what is dull, ugly, harsh, or commonplace; and, secondly, the subordination of morality to beauty. These were the practical faults of the Greek "grace," and they are the practical faults of our present love of beauty. Our æsthetic or imaginative love turns away with pain from the unloveliness of human life, from harsh tasks, from vulgar men, from the things that weary us. And it looks first at beauty, and *then* at truth and justice and purity. That is not to have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to conceive anything more apart from his life than such an isolated devotion to beauty, such an exclusive and excluding "grace." The grace of the Greek was in Christ, but it went further than the Greek. Being in union with the essential Beauty of God, and seeing God in all things and in all men, it saw traces of the divine loveliness everywhere, believed in it and drew it forth. His disciples marvelled that he talked so long with the dull woman of Samaria; yet Christ saw fathoms deep in her soul the pearl of spiritual beauty, and he drew it forth. It is a picture of all the work of his grace, in this sense, upon commonplace souls. Nor did harsh and unlovely tasks deter him. He sought out the diseased, the miserable, the hideous leper, those who

were stained with ugly sin. There was such beauty in redeeming and soothing and helping them that all their unloveliness did not exist to Christ. And he went himself through all the pain and horror of a dreadful death, and it became perfectly beautiful to him, because it was done in the glowing fire of love. That was the way in which his grace and his love of beauty were shown in distinction from the grace and the love of beauty which stand aside from the unloveliness of things and men.

Once more, his grace and his love of doing and being the Beautiful were not apart from, or greater than, his love of and doing of moral things, but coincident with them. Nothing which was false or impure or unjust was, in itself, beautiful to Christ; and the first glory of his grace and charm was its harmony with righteousness. We look at it, then, not only with tenderness, such as we feel for loving-kindness, not only with delight, such as we feel for beauty, but also with all that earnest approval and grave enthusiasm which we give to things and persons who are good. Christ's charm has its root in love, and is identical with truth and justice and purity and courage. It grasps the hand of the Platonist and the Stoic alike, without the vagueness of the one and the rigor of the other. And, while it holds to the Epicurean so far as the early Epicureans said that pleasure was the highest good because goodness was identical with pleasure, it turns aside from the later Epicureans, and from those of our day who put pleasure in beauty first, to the loss or lessening of moral goodness. Guarded thus on all sides, yet taking in all that is noble in all efforts to find the highest good, it was in truth grace in its sense of beauty that Christ possessed.

That grace, so guarded, so complete, pray that it may be with you all, in the year that comes to-morrow. It will bless your lives, and it will make of you a blessing. It will make you at one with all that is tender, pitiful, dear, and sweet in human loving-kindness. It will make you at one with all that is sensitive and delicate and graceful in manner and speech, and create in you an harmonious soul. Men will think your life beautiful, and inspiration and effort will flow from it. It will make you at one with moral good, just and true and pure. And it will take all that is loving in humanity, and all that is fair, and all that is moral, and link them to and complete them by uniting them to the love of God, and to God's love for all men; so that to human love and moral love and imaginative love will be added the spiritual love which gathers them all into perfection.

Therefore, having this inspiration and aspiration, having the power of becoming blessed in sharing of this grace of Christ's, we will put aside the sorrow with which we look back on the year, and take up a manlier and more resolute strain. Whatever may have been our pain, our loss, our failure, our sin, we are not yet dead, nor yet lost. And there is much to redeem and much to win. We may yet be blessed, even in a weary life of struggle, if we have courage and faith and good-will, by union with the grace that belonged to Christ. And, when we are so blessed, we may by that grace bless others, even though we can not take much of the blessedness to ourselves. We can not be happy, but we may be good. We may not have peace, but we may win the beauty of moral conquest. We may go softly all our years, in remembrance of failure and wrong; but we may at last

feel that God has forgiven us, and that he is making us like himself through Jesus Christ and through love of his grace. And, having these hopes, we may, on this last day of the year, when we stand on the verge of the past and future, say with humility and love to each other, — for it is beautiful to end the year with blessing,— The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. Amen.



# THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRIST.

1867.

“Jesus increased in wisdom.”—LUKE ii., 52.

THE subject on which we are employed is the development of Christ. I spoke last Sunday of Christ's development in childhood, through the influence of outward nature. Our subject to-day is the intellectual development of Christ.

The first hint which we receive of this intellectual development is the story of his journey to Jerusalem. We find him in the Temple, listening, and asking questions of the doctors; or, in other words, exhibiting himself as possessed of the two first necessities for intellectual development,—engrossed attention and eager curiosity.

Now, what were the steps by which, we may conjecture, the Divine Child had arrived at this kindling of the intellect, and how did these several steps affect his character?

Last Sunday, we endeavored to represent him as stirred by the outward scenery of nature to recognize what was within himself, and as recognizing in nature not the dead and lifeless world, as we conceive it, but

a living world, beneath whose outward forms lay spiritual realities.

Now, communion with nature intensifies the desire of communion with man. And it seems to me impossible to deny that he who afterward, even in his most solemn hours, on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane, sought and surrounded himself with the sympathy of his three favorite disciples, did not also, as a child, seek for human sympathy to share with him his childhood's delight in the beauty and solemnity of nature. Hence there was strengthened in him love of man, arising from love of nature. There was quickened in him desire of social communion, desire of seeing his own thought reflected by other minds, desire of knowing what other beings than himself both knew and thought and did in the world.

There was not much to gratify these desires in Nazareth. We know the character of the place; and the Holy Child must even then have felt the first keen stings of that suffering for the sin of the world which made him, as man, die to redeem the world. Moreover, a remote and petty village could supply but little food to his awakened and craving intellect. He had soon assimilated all he could find there of the elements necessary to develop his mental powers. I can conceive him eagerly looking forward to the day when he should accompany his parents to Jerusalem,—not unduly excited, not impatient, but nobly curious to see human life concentrated in one of its great centres, to watch the movement and the variety of the crowd of many nations who poured into Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover.

At last, the hour came, and with the "quiet indepen-

dence of heart " which he had secured through still communion with nature, with the deep desire of knowing men, and with a deep sense of childlike repose on God, the Boy, Christ Jesus, set forth with his company from Nazareth. No doubt, according to pious Jewish practice, he had been instructed in the history of his people; and now what thoughts were his, as for the first time he saw the interior of Palestine, the Jordan rolling deep between its banks, the savage landscape of the eastern desert! There was not a spot along the route which was not dignified by some association or hallowed by some great name.

Whatever we in youth have felt — for life wears out the keenness of receptiveness — when we have stood upon some spot made glorious in our country's history, whatever thrill of high emotion or rush of noble impulse has then come upon us, and swept us out of our narrow sphere of childish interests into the wide region of interests which cluster round the words, "our country and its heroes," came then, we may be sure, upon the Child. A larger horizon of thought opened before him. The heroic past of Israel became a reality. The sight of places where noble deeds were done made the deeds themselves real. And not only the deeds, but also the *men*; for, in the years gone by, Hebrew men had here done and suffered greatly. Here was their theatre: this was Jordan; there was Jericho; there David had passed by; there Jacob had set up his rugged pillow. At once, localized, impersonated by the landscape, the men of Israel became real living personages, the past was crowded with moving forms, and History was born in the intellect of Christ. The impression must have deepened in him as he entered

Jerusalem. He must have felt in heart and soul the shock of the great town's first presence. He could not walk unmoved among the streets, so vocal with the fame of Solomon, the patriotic enthusiasm of Isaiah, the sorrow and the passion of Jeremiah. The stones of the walls spoke to him, the gates replied; and, when first he saw the mighty mass of the great Temple flashing white in the sunlight upon its uplifted rock, what a thrill!—a thrill of that fine excitement, half of sense and half of soul, which is almost a physical pain, and out of which springs more creative thought than comes afterward to a man in a year of that “set gray life” of work which we know so well in London. These are the impressions which kindle latent intellect, which abide with us as living things within the brain, engendering the life of thought; and if *we*, cold northern natures, have felt these things in our childhood, and at a younger age than Christ was now, how must an Oriental child of genius (to assume for a moment a ground which the destructive critics will not deny) have felt their power on his intellect?

Look at another point.

As he drew near to Jerusalem in this journey, various troops of pilgrims must have joined their company. He saw for the first time the great diversity of the human race. Accustomed to one type alone at Nazareth, and that a limited type, for Nazareth was an outlying village,—and a somewhat degraded type, for Nazareth had a bad reputation,—he was now brought into contact with many types of men.

The same kind of result, we may conjecture, was produced upon his intellect as is produced when a boy is

first sent out of the narrow circle of home into the varied human life of a public school. The impression which is then made upon the intellect of a boy is one of the most productive which he receives in life. The impression made upon the mind of Christ must have been of equal depth at least, probably far greater; for, first, we know from his after life that his intellect was of the mightiest character, and, secondly, the variety which met him was greater than that with which an English boy is brought into contact. Thus, it was not only the realization of the past through the power of association which stirred his intellect: it was also stirred by the contact with the varied national and individual life of the present.

And then there was that wonderful Jerusalem in front where all this variety of life was now concentrated. What wonder if the pure, high-hearted Child, with eager thoughts beginning to move, looked forward with intellectual enthusiasm to his arrival among the throng of men?

More and more, it is plain, the vast idea of Humanity must have unfolded itself within him during the journey. Then came, to complete and fix this idea, the rush and confusion of the great multitude in Jerusalem during the Feast,—men of every nation under heaven in the streets; strange dresses, strange faces. There was the Roman soldier, grave, and bearing in his face the stamp of law and sacrifice; there was the acute Greek countenance, the heavy Egyptian features, the voluptuous lip and subtle glance of the Persian, the wild Arab eyes. Every face was a mystery, and the greatest mystery of all was the wonderful world of men.

What kindles thought like this,—the first rush upon the brain of the idea of the diversity of humanity?

It is an idea naturally conceived by a boy. We do not impute to Christ, at this time, the thoughts which arise from it, too numerous to mention. But we find it here in its origin; and in the silent time to come in Nazareth it worked in his intellect, producing its fruit of thought from year to year. Do we trace it in his ministry? “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring.” “Many shall come from the East and West.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

There is another intellect-awakening thought correlative to this of the diversity of humanity, which I cannot but think was first stirred now in the mind of Christ,—the thought of the *unity of the race*.

There was one spirit predominant in all the pilgrims to the Feast. They came up to Jerusalem, diverse as they were, inspired by one thought, to perform one common worship, in one place, to one God. It was the form in which the national unity of the Jewish people had been of old embodied. But now hundreds of other nations had received the Jewish religion as proselytes. Christ, therefore, saw not only the Jews, but Gentiles, united by the worship of a universal God. We do not say that he clearly conceived the thought of the oneness of humanity at the age of twelve,—it was probably too large for his normal development,—but we do say that there is nothing unnatural in believing that the germ of it was then first quickened into life. Now there are few thoughts which more than this promote intellectual development. We may imagine it slowly growing into

fulness during the maturing years at Nazareth, till at last it altered its form and became personal. This unity of humanity, so broken, so imperfect,—this great idea,—where is it realized perfectly? And out of the depths of Christ's divine and human consciousness came the answer. It is realized in *me*. All that is human meets in *me*. *I* am the centre where all the diverse and converging lines of humanity meet. *I* am the race.

Once more, in tracing the intellectual development of Christ in connection with this one glimpse of his history, we come to the scene in the Temple. Led there by his desire to know, he was brought for the first time into contact with cultivated intellects. He heard for the first time the acute reasoning of the schools: he realized for the first time the vastness of the sea of knowledge. The thought of the diversity of the human intellect was exhibited to him in the diversity of the opinions which he heard. He was made acquainted with the parties among the Jews: with the petrified theology of the scribes, with the conventional morality of the Pharisee, with the conservative infidelity of the Sadducee, with all the false show of religion and the death which lay beneath. There he saw

“Decency and Custom starving Truth,  
And blind Authority beating with his staff  
The Child that might have led him.”

Probably, these were, at first, only impressions; but we cannot doubt that they produced their fruit at Nazareth. For, starting from these experiences, there grew up within him that clear comprehension of Jewish life and all its opinions and parties, and of the way in which he

was destined to work upon them, which comes out so wonderfully in his ministry. He did not hear in vain the doctors disputing, he did not ask them questions without a great intellectual result.

Such must have been the influence on the intellect of Christ of his days in the Temple. It should be delightful to us to think of him, whom we reverence as Master and Lord, sharing thus in our curious childhood, listening with engrossed attention, "both hearing them"—questioning with eager desire—"and asking them questions." It should be a wonderful thought for us to imagine, with love and awe combined, how idea after idea, existing there potentially, unfolded their germs under this influence in the mind of Christ,—germs which, maturing, and as they matured generating others, grew up during the years of silence at Nazareth, into that perfect flower of intellect which, shedding its living seeds over eighteen centuries, has given birth to the great ideas which once created, and still create, the greater part of the intellectual life of the world.

We may conjecture that the first impressions in Jerusalem awoke in Christ's spirit the elevated view of human nature which we conceive from his after life to have been latent in him as a child. But when he came to consider classes and individuals, and not the race as a whole,—in its idea,—he found hypocrisy, selfishness, tyranny, meanness. But the first idea must have remained firm, coexistent with the other sad ideas which followed it.

Man, then, was great, and man was base; man was mighty, and man was weak; man had a divine nature, and man had given himself over to a base nature. But



the greatness, strength, and divineness were his true nature: the others were the result of an alien and usurping power. Both existed; but the one existed to be made perfect, the other to be destroyed. Hence, not all the evil Christ came into contact with, not all the blindness, sin, and cruelty which he saw and suffered from, could ever overthrow his divine trust in that which man might become. Here was a real spiritual thought bearing on his mission,—*man is capable of being redeemed.*

As his spirit grew more conscious of what it really was, he felt that truth—man's capability of being redeemed—not only without, but within himself. How could he despair of human nature, when he knew that he himself was sinless human nature? His very existence as man was proof that man was destined to be perfect. Conscious thus, from his own sinlessness, of man's possibility of sinlessness, he became conscious, for the same reason, of another truth: that he was the destined Redeemer of the race from the usurping power of sin. Being pure, he knew he could save the impure; being perfect Life, he knew he could conquer the death of man; being perfect Love, he knew he could cast out of the race the devil of self-seeking. Immediately, intuitively, he felt *thus*: was conscious of himself, first, as sinless humanity; secondly, as the Redeemer of humanity from sin.

We seem, in this way, to see faintly a strange co-existence of apparently contradictory ideas within the spirit of Christ during his life at Nazareth. One would almost think that that impression of the greatness of the human soul would have been worn out by daily contact with the wild dwellers at Nazareth; and yet with what

sort of a spirit did he come forth into the world? With unshaken trust in human nature, recognizing its evil, but believing, as none have ever believed before or since, in its nobility, its capabilities, its infinite power of work. It was not only interest in humanity, it was love of humanity, love, the "business of his Father."

We come to that by slow degrees; rise into that life by finding out the wretchedness and death of self, but in the Saviour's spirit it rose into being like a flower from a seed already there. It developed itself till it penetrated his whole nature with one great spiritual thought, "I will give away all my being for the human race."

This love of man, and desire to impart life to those who needed life, was correlative to another spiritual idea,—indignation at evil. It was this which balanced love in Christ, and kept it from the weakness of our affection and the maudlin sentiment of much of our philanthropy. Christ abhorred sin, and saw it in its native darkness. There was in him, therefore, an agony of desire to redeem us from it, and a pitying indignation for our desolate slavery. He labored to convince men that they did need a deliverer from sin; and when a man, like Zaccheus, felt his selfishness and desired freedom, it is wonderful how the Saviour's spirit sprung to meet the seeking spirit, clung to it, and poured into it a stream of life and faith and hope. But when men, for the sake of keeping up an ecclesiastical dominion, for the sake of success, for the honor of dead maxims, stopped the way of others, gave men lifeless forms, and persecuted the Light because it condemned their darkness, how the holy anger kindled! As the Child listened to the intol-

erance of the Pharisee, the dogmatism of the scribe, and the scornful infidelity of the Sadducee, there must have sprung up in his heart an instinctive feeling of opposition; and this spiritual wrath at wrong done to the souls of men grew and deepened at Nazareth,—as the meaning of what he had heard in the Temple was made clear to him by his after knowledge,—till it culminated in the withering denunciations of his ministry.

Christ returned to Nazareth from Jerusalem, the same, and yet how changed, how largely widened and deepened must have been his human nature! The thought of humanity had now taken a higher place in his mind than the thought of nature. The thought of God as the Father of man had now succeeded to the thought of God as the Life of nature. His own relation to the race grew into distinctness. The deeper “knowledge of the world” which he had gained made, as if by a subtler sense, all the common human life of Nazareth an image of the Life of the great world. He saw—being himself *the Man*—in every one he met the great common principles of humanity, while he received the impress of their distinctive characteristics. “Among least things, he had the sense of greatest.” There was not a word or action of other men which did not, as he grew in wisdom, touch a thousand other things, and fall into relationship with them under the universal principles which, being the daily companions of his intellect, linked together in his mind the present in which he lived to the past and future of the race. A new interest had arisen within him, the interest in humanity, or rather, I should say, a new love. It clung to him, it pervaded his whole thought. That scene in Jerusalem stamped itself on his memory forever.

With this human centre of thought, he lived on in peaceful solitude in the stillness of the upland town. Often, he must have wandered to the summit of the hill, when wearied by the petty life of the village, and, as in after life, so now, communed in that prayer which is not petition, but union deeply felt, with God his Father, and seen his life unrolling itself before him—not devised and planned, but intuitively recognized—as a panorama of which death for truth and for love of men was the sad and glorious close. But he was not deprived of tenderer and more delightful thought. How often must the thoughts of his childhood,—of which we spoke last Sunday,—the thoughts developed in him by the beauty of his Father's world of Life and Light in nature, have come to satisfy and cheer his inward life of thought! How often, as the turmoil of the world pressed upon his brain, must the stars and mountains and the peace of evening have given to him their silent ministrations! How often, as the shadow of his sorrow fell upon his heart, must the quiet joy of his Father's order, felt in nature, have restored and soothed his intellect!

For it were exquisite pleasure to him to pass (with full knowledge now of the true relation of man and nature) from the contemplation of the weakness and the want of life of the human world into communion with that living spiritual world of God's activity and peace which he saw within the phenomena of nature. This was the one deep solitary pleasure of his life. For though, as we have said, the thought of humanity, and not the thought of nature, was now the pre-eminent thought in his mind,—because the redemption of man was his work,—yet the more divine thought must always have been the

thought of nature. His labor was inspired by the former: his recreation, joy, and consolation were supplied by the latter.

Brethren, let us part with the solemnizing imagination of this,—Christ's silent growth in wisdom in the stillness of the retired Galilean village. May it calm our noisy lives and our obtrusive interests to realize, if but for one dignified moment, the image of the Saviour of the world, in whom was now concealed from men the regeneration and redemption of the race,—living a forgotten life, but ever “voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.”

## THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND.—I.

1871.

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”—MATT. xiii., 31, 32.

WE are told, in one of the Arabian stories which charmed our childhood, of a fairy tent which a young prince brought, hidden in a walnut-shell, to his father. Placed in the council-chamber, it grew till it encanopied the king and his ministers. Taken into the court-yard, it filled the space till all the household stood beneath its shade. Brought into the midst of the great plain without the city, where all the army was encamped, it spread its mighty awning all abroad, till it gave shelter to a host. It had infinite flexibility, infinite expansiveness.

We are told in our sacred books of a religion given to man, which, at its first setting forward, was less than the least of all seeds. It was the true fairy tent for the spirits of men. It grew till it embraced a few Jews of every class; and men thought, “Now, it will do no more: it can never suit the practical sense of the Roman, nor

shelter beneath its sway the subtile intellect of the Greek. To do one is improbable, to do both is impossible." Curious to say, it did both. It made the Roman more practical: it made the Greek intellect alive again. When Rome fell, and during her long decay, some may have said: "This boasted religion may suit civilization, but it can never adapt itself to barbarism." But it expanded in new directions to embrace the transalpine nations, and took new forms to suit them with an unequalled flexibility. Soon it covered Europe with its shadow; and, in a continent where types of race are oddly and vitally varied, it found acceptance with all. It has gone abroad since then, and reached out its arms to the Oriental, the African, the American tribes, and the islands of the seas. And, however small may have been its success at present, there is one thing in which it differs from every other religion: it has been found capable of being assimilated by all, from the wild negro of the west coast to the educated gentleman of India. I speak of the teaching of Christ, not of unyielding Christian systems; and nothing is more remarkable in that teaching than the way in which it throws off, like a serpent, one after another, the sloughs of system, and spreads undivided in the world, and operates unspent, by its own divine vitality.

Now, it is this extraordinary power of easy expansion, this power of adapting itself to the most diverse forms of thought, which is one strong proof of the eternal fitness of Christianity for mankind. This is our subject.

It has these powers, first, because of its want of system.

Christ gave ideas, but not their forms. We have one

connected discourse of his, and there is not a vestige of systematic theology in it. Nay more, many of the statements are so incapable of being grasped by the intellect acting alone, and so ambiguous and paradoxical to the pure reason, that they seem to have been spoken for the despair of systematizers.

What is one to do with a sentence like this, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"? We cannot make a dogma out of it; we cannot get it into a system; it breaks down under logical analysis. "What is it to be pure in heart?" asks some defining person. "Does it refer to general cleanliness from all sin, or freedom from the special sin of unchaste thought? What is it to see God? Above all, what is God? That question is insoluble, unknowable."

We cannot call a teaching systematic which in this way leaves aside the understanding, unless first instructed by feeling, which appeals first of all to certain spiritual powers in man which it declares to be the most human powers he possesses. Such phrases have no intellectual outlines. Purity of heart has nothing to do with the region of the understanding: God is not an intellectual conception. But, if man has distinctly spiritual emotions and desires, words like these thrill him like music.

Indeed, there is a fine analogy to Christ's words in music. It is the least definable of all the arts: it appeals to emotion, not to reason. Neither you nor I can say of that air of Mozart's that it means this or that. It means one thing to me, another thing to you. It leaves, however, an indefinite but similar impression upon us both,—a sense of exquisite melody which soothes life, a love of a life in harmony with the impression made, and



an affection for the man who gave us so delicate an emotion. So is it with the words of Christ. The understanding cannot define them: the spirit receives them, and each man receives them in accordance with the state of his spirit. To one, these words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," are solemn with warning, to another they are soothing with comfort; to one they mean battle, to another peace; to one they sound like music on the waters, to another like the tramp of doom.

Could you define the meaning of Mozart's air, so that it should be the same to all, how much had been lost! Could you do the same by Christ's words, what a misfortune! To limit them to one meaning would be to destroy their life.

Again, take the paradoxical sayings. "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other." Submit that to the criticism of the understanding, without permitting spiritual feeling to play upon it, and it becomes absurd. Define it accurately, and there is either too much or too little left of it. Tell the man who has a tendency to fear that he is to take it literally, and he becomes a coward on principle; tell the same to another who has military traditions of honor, and he says that Christ's teaching is not fit for practical life. But do not attempt to define it: let the spirit of each man explain it to himself, and the truth which is in it will work its way.

There is no doubt, I think, that Christ would have refused to explain it. All he would have said, he did say: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

It seems as if Christ distinctly chose indefiniteness in

certain parts of his teaching, in order to shut out the possibility of any rigid system of Christian thought.

Of course there are positive and definite portions of his teaching. "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "Love one another, even as I have loved you." These were definite statements, which appealed to the spirit of man; but even in their case Christ never wove them into a fixed system of theology, nor hardened them into an unchanging mode of practice.

How was he to systematize aspiration to perfection, or define the love of man to man, or explain in limited words the passionate desire to be redeemed from the moral degradation of sin? Was he to reply to men who asked him to say what he meant by "our" in "Our Father"?

No: the statements were positive, but they had to do with things not knowable by the understanding, not definable by the intellect. Therefore, Christ's religion can never be made into a system. It will form the basis and the life of system after system: it will never be itself a system. And, because of this, it has the power of expanding with the religious growth of the world, and of adapting itself to the religious stand-points of various nations.

Men must form systems: it belongs to our nature to do so. Fifty years did not pass after the death of Christ before Christianity was cast into a mould, and intellectual propositions formed around it. But even then Saint Paul cast it into one mould, and Saint John into one quite different. It was flexible to both, and retained

in both these men its root ideas and its spiritual influence, so that its spirit through Saint John had power upon the Oriental and through Saint Paul upon the Western world.

A century afterward, the modes of representing Christianity changed, and continued to change from generation to generation in that intellectual time, till there were as many systems of Christianity as there were nations in the Church. Its flexibility was proved to be almost infinite. And it has continued so up to the present time. It is systematized in three or four forms in England at this moment, and they may all have perished in a century; but the spirit of Christ's teaching will have remained, expanding to suit the new thoughts of men and the progress of the whole nation. Therefore, it is contained in the idea of Christianity that its outward form should be not only subject to continual change, but should even be different at one and the same time in different nations.

Hence, the fighting and opposition of sect to sect which has been objected to Christianity is one of those things which flow from its very nature. If its founder left it unsystematized, it was sure to be systematized in different ways, and these differences would produce contention. Contention is an evil, but it is a less evil than the spiritual stagnation which would have followed upon a hard and fast system.

Moreover, if Christianity was to expand, it was necessary that its truths should be the subjects of controversy, that different and opposing systems might place now one of its ideas, now another, in vivid light; so that, by the slow exhaustion of false views, it might come forth

clear at last, unrobing itself as a mountain from the mists of the dawn.

Make any religion into a system, define its outlines clearly, and before long there will be no movement of thought about it, no enthusiasm of feeling, no vital interest felt in its ideas. It suits the time at which it is put forward; but, when that time has passed, it has nothing to say to men. But let system be foreign to it, —let its original ideas be capable of taking various religious forms,—and it will have the power of expanding forever, of becoming systematic without ever binding itself to system; changing its form not only in every time, but in every country, and growing in a direct ratio to the growth of the world.

Therefore, we say the original want of system in Christ's teaching ensures its power of expansion, and that fits it for the use of the Race now and hereafter.

But, if this were all, it would prove nothing. There must be a quality in a religion destined to be of eternal fitness for men which directly appeals to all men, or else its want of system will only minister to its ruin. And, if that quality exist, it must be one which we cannot conceive as ever failing to interest men, and therefore as expanding with the progress of Man.

We find this in the identification of Christianity with the life of a perfect Man.

What is Christianity? Christianity is Christ,—the whole of Human Nature made at one with God. Is it possible to leave that behind as the race advances? On the contrary, the very idea supposes that the religion which has it at its root has always an ideal to present to men, and therefore always an interest for men. As

long as men are men, can they ever have a higher moral conception of God than that given to them through the character of a perfect Man, and can we conceive, in centuries to come, men ever getting beyond that idea, as long as they are in the human state? The conception of what the ideal Man is will change, as men grow more or less perfect, or as mankind is seen more or less as a vast organism; but, as long as there is a trace of imperfection in us, this idea,—that perfect humanity, that is, perfect fatherhood, perfect love, perfect justice,—all our imperfect goodnesses,—realized in perfection, and impersonated in One Being, is *God to us*, can never fail to create religion and kindle worship. It is the last absurdity, looking at the root ideas of Christianity, to say that it is ceasing to be a religion for the race.

The “religion of Humanity” and the “worship of Humanity,” considered as a great and living whole, is the latest phase into which religion, apart from Christianity, has been thrown. I am unable to see how it differs, so far as it asserts a principle, from the great Christian idea. Everything it says about Humanity, and our duties to Humanity, seems to me to be implicitly contained in Christ’s teaching, and to be no more than an expansion of the original Christian idea of a divine Man in whom all the race is contained, and who is, ideally, the race. But I am far from wishing this new religious idea to be set aside as unworthy of consideration, nor do I join in the cry which has been raised against it. On the contrary, I wish it to be carefully studied, that we may get all the good out of it we can, and add many of its ideas to our present form of Christianity. Most of its positive teaching is Christian in thought and feeling,

though it denies or ignores other Christian ideas which seem necessary for a human religion. It would be untrue in a Christian teacher to despise or abuse a religion which puts self-sacrifice forward as the foundation of practical duty, not only among men, but among societies and nations. It would be equally untrue, if I did not say that the refusal to consider the existence of a personal God and the immortality of man will, in the end, make that religion die of starvation.

But, with regard to the special point in question,—the worship of a great Being, called Humanity,—there is this difference, and it is a radical one, between Christianity and the religion of Positivism, that the Humanity the latter worships is indefinite to the religious emotions, while its system is definite to the understanding. It is in this the exact reverse of Christianity, which has no system capable of being defined by the understanding, and possesses a Human Person distinctly defined for the emotions. It is plain that, if what I have said be worth anything, the definite system in this religion will be an element of death in it, and forbid its contemporaneous growth with the race. It is no matter of doubt to me that the worship of a Humanity—which it needs an active intellectual effort to conceive, and a large knowledge of history to conceive adequately, or which secludes one sex as a special representative of its ideal—can never stir religious emotion nor awake action based on love to it, in the mass of mankind, however much it may do so in particular persons. The general mass of men require that this ideal Man be concentrated for them into one person, with whom they can have distinct personal relations, whom they can personally

love for his love, and reverence for his perfection. It is not easy, knowing mankind as we do,—seeing its meanness, cruelty, and weakness, as well as all its nobility,—to represent it to ourselves as an object of worship, or to care particularly whether its blessing rests on us or not. Than this, it is certainly more easy to conceive, as an object of worship, God, revealed in will and character by a perfect Man; and more simple to think of one Man embodying all the Race than of the whole Race as one Man. It is a more satisfying thought to give our love to human nature as seen in Christ, without evil, full of perfect love and sympathy, both male and female in thought and feeling, than to Mankind as seen in history. It is more delightful to love men as seen in him, for the glorious ideal they will attain to, than to love them as they are, and without a sure hope of their eternal progress; and that the blessing of Christ's perfect Manhood and Womanhood should rest upon us, that his love, pity, strength, support, and peace should belong to us and accompany us; that he should attend us as a personal friend and interest himself in our lives, till they reach the perfection of his life; and that he should be doing the same for all our brothers as for us,—does seem more fitted to kindle worship and stir emotion than the thought that we are parts of a vast organism which continues to live, like the body, by the ceaseless and eternal death of its parts.

It may be possible to feel a pleasure in sacrificing one's self for the good of this great Being which lives by consuming its own children, and to enjoy the thought of immortality in its continued progress without ever personally realizing that immortality. But, after all, this

overshadowing and abstract "Humanity," which crushes us while it moves on, is not attractive, and is more likely in the end to create despair and anger than to give life to hope and love.

But the ideal Man in Christ is very different. It demands the same self-sacrifice, but it does not annihilate men. And in itself it is intensely interesting to men, because it is so perfectly human. Whether men are Christians or not, that exquisite life of Christ will always attract them; so true to childhood, youth, and manhood; so simple, yet so complex; so womanly, yet so manly; in love, in honor, and in truth, in noble endurance, in resolute will and purity, so ideal, yet so real to that which we feel we ought to be, or may be, that there is no possible age of the world in the far-off future which will not, as long as men are human, love that with the love which is worship.

So the ideal manhood, which is at the root of Christianity, ensures to it a power of expanding with the growth of the race; and this power is one proof at least of the eternal fitness of Christ's teaching for mankind.

The third quality in it which ensures its expansiveness is that it has directly to do with the subjects which have always stirred the greatest curiosity, awakened the profoundest thought, and produced the highest poetry in man. And these are the subjects which are insoluble by logical analysis, unknowable by the understanding: What is God, and his relation to us? Whence have we come? Whither are we going? What is evil, and why is it here? What is truth, and is there any positive truth at all? Do we die or live forever?

It is the fashion among some to say, "Do not trouble



yourself about the insoluble"; and there are those who succeed, perhaps, in doing so. Well, I think them wrong, as they think me wrong. No one feels more intensely than I do the pain of not having things clear,—the vital torment of a thirst ever renewed, and not as yet fully satisfied; but I had rather keep the pain and the thirst than annihilate, as it seems to me, a portion of my human nature. I must trouble myself about these things, and so must others; and the trouble has its source in an integral part of our human nature. We must tear away that part before we can get rid of these subjects. To deny that this part of our nature exists is absurd; to affirm that it has been produced by education in men, not having originally been in their nature, is to beg the question. What we have to do with is what lies before us; and if I were asked what is the most universal characteristic of man, that which most clearly distinguishes him from the lower animals, I should answer that it was the passion for solving what is called the insoluble, the desire of knowing what is said to be unknowable.

I meet that longing everywhere. There is no history which is not full of it. There is no savage nation which has learned the first rudiments of thought, in which you do not find it. There is no poetry which does not bear the traces of it,—nay, whose noblest passages are not inspired by it. There is scarcely a single philosophy which does not work at it, or at least acknowledge it by endeavoring to lay it aside. One cannot talk for an hour to a friend without touching it at some point, nor take up a newspaper without seeing its influence; and, if Christ had started a religion for mankind with the dictum, Lay aside thinking about these questions, his

religion would seem to be unfit for men: it would have shut out the whole of the most curious part of our being. But he did the exact contrary: he recognized these questions as the first and the most important. He came, he said, for the express purpose of enabling us to solve them sufficiently. He said that truth was to be found, that God could be known, that immortality was a reality, that evil was to be overthrown, that we came from God and went to God.

But to solve these questions and to know God is not done at once. It is the work of a lifetime. Christ said that there were answers to be found: he did not reveal the answers at once. He did not wish to take away from men the discipline of personal effort, nor to free them from the pain, the victory over which would give them spiritual strength, the endurance of which would make them men. He put them in the way of solving these questions for themselves. By asking and seeking, by prayer and humility, they were to solve the apparently insoluble. By doing his will, by living his life of holiness, self-sacrifice, and devotion to truth, they were at last to know the truth.

Therefore, because these problems which are called insoluble were left by Christ as personal questions which every man born into the world must solve for himself, human effort after God can never suffer the stagnation which complete knowledge would produce in imperfect man. Religious emotions, the play of feeling and intellect around spiritual things, desire after higher good, prayer, active work toward a more perfect love and toward the winning of truth, are all kept up in us by the sense of imperfect knowledge, imperfect spiritual

being, and, in addition, by the hope which grows stronger through the experience of growth, that we shall know even as we are known, and become perfect even as our God.

Remove from religion these difficult questions, and the hope and the passion of discovering their answers, and I believe that all religious emotions will die, and all religion of any kind finally perish in contact with the world.

It is because Christianity as taught by Christ acknowledges these questions as necessarily human; it is because it leaves their solution to personal effort, and so secures an undying source of religious effort and emotion; it is because it promises that those who follow the method of Christ, and live his life, shall solve them,—that Christianity belongs to men, is calculated to expand, to suit men in every age. If so, there is another reason which may be alleged for its eternal fitness for the race.

Lastly, if what Christianity says be true, that we shall all enter into a life everlasting, these three qualities in Christ's religion of which I have spoken are not without their meaning or their value to us there.

That our religion should be without a system will enable us, in a new life and under new conditions, to reorganize it without difficulty, to fit it into the new circumstances of our being, to use it in novel ways.

That our religion is a human religion, that it appeals directly to human nature, that it is nothing apart from mankind, that it is woven up with all the desires and hopes and sorrows of men, that it bids us concentrate all the race into One Person, and love all men in him, that it throws all our effort and enthusiasm on the

progress of mankind,—these do not belong to this world alone. If we live again, we shall live in a higher way, in the race; for we shall live in Christ, not an isolated life, but a life in all mankind. We shall be more united with our fellow-men, more ready to give ourselves away to them, more interested in the progress of mankind, more able to help. Never, as long as Christ is, can we forget, or cease our communion with, the whole world of men.

And, finally, that even after attaining much, enough at least to set us in all the peace which is good for us, there should remain, as I think there will remain, in the eternal life, certain questions which we shall have to solve, certain things which man cannot wholly know, it will not be an evil, but a good thing for us. For that there should always be things above us and unknown ensures our eternal aspiration, ensures to us the passionate delight of ceaseless progress.

## THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY FOR MANKIND.—II.

1871.

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”—MATT. xiii., 31, 32.

THOSE who love variety of color and variety of form can scarcely reap a deeper pleasure than is his who walks slowly through the lower part of one of the Italian valleys of the Alps when spring is at its height. The meadows are full of flowers, at once so brilliant, soft, and manifold of hue, that the grass seems sown with dust of rainbows. The gray boulders, which lie like castles on the sloping lawns, are stained scarlet and gold and bronze with many lichens. Chestnut and walnut spread their rich leaves below; above, the oak clusters in the hollow places; higher still, the pines climb the heights in dark battalions. Color, form, development, are all different: each flower, leaf, and tree, each variety of grass or lichen, has its own peculiar beauty, its own individuality.

It seems impossible to include them all under one

term, to say that they are all substantially one thing. Yet they are all transmuted sunshine. Every fibre, every cell, every atomic arrangement which enables each of them to give us the sensation of red or violet, or what color lies between these, has been built up through means of the force or the forces of the sunshine. Nevertheless, this one original element has been modified by the tendency—I use a word which but expresses our ignorance—of each seed to assume a specialized form at a certain stage in its growth, to be modified by what one would call in mankind its character. So that we have two things,—one simple source of vegetable life, infinite forms and modifications of form through which that force is conditioned.

It is a happy analogy by which to arrive at the idea of the one spirit of Christ's life, received and modified into a thousand forms by different characters of men and different types of nations. Christianity is like the sunshine,—not a given form, nor imposing a uniform system of growth: it is a force of spiritual heat and light, which expands, develops, and irradiates; a spiritual chemical force which destroys dead things, and quickens half-living things in the character. It is assimilated, but according to the original arrangement of the spiritual atoms of each character, so that it does not destroy, but enhances individuality; does not injure, but intensifies variety.

There has scarcely ever lived a single Christian man whose Christianity has been identical in form with that of another, though the species may have been the same. There is certainly no Christian nation which has produced a type of Christianity uniform with that of

another. Look at the Apostolic Church, read the Epistles which remain to us. The letters of Saint James, of Saint Peter, of Saint Paul, of Saint John, differ as the oak differs from the chestnut, as the fir differs from the ash-tree. These represent in various forms what the sunshine has done for them: the Epistles represent, in various forms of Christian thought, what the spirit of Christ had wrought in their authors.

I venture to say that there never has existed a set of religious books which so manifestly despised outward consistency, and so boldly fell back upon an inner unity of spirit; which, though they systematized to a certain extent, showed more plainly, taken together, that there was no system in the source from whence they drew their inspiration; which dared more audaciously to vary their modes of expressing spiritual truths, relying on, and because of, their appeal to the primary instincts of mankind.

This was one of the elements which we saw last Sunday lay at the root of the success of Christianity. It left individual and national development free, and it appealed to a common humanity. And, having no system, it promoted liberty of growth in mankind; and when that growth had passed a certain stage, and the character of the time changed, it changed its form in turn to suit the new ideas of men. But, beneath all these varied representations, there will always be a few clear principles, and a spirit which will remain the same. Whether Christianity exist as Calvinist or Ritualist, Roman Catholic or Lutheran, Wesleyan or Unitarian, all these forms will have taken their life and built up their being from the sunlight of Christ.

It will be easily seen from this how much I despise the struggle for uniformity, and how much I dread it as directly anti-Christian. Unity of spirit we should endeavor to seek for, and keep in the bond of peace; but uniformity! Imagine a world in which all the trees were pines.

The effort to establish uniformity is not only the note of an uncultivated spirit, it is especially the mark of one who has not studied the teaching of Christ, nor the teaching of the Apostles. And Christianity has been especially unfortunate in the way in which, for many ages, its followers, foolishly dismayed by the cry of inconsistency, have made it almost a point to struggle against Christ's altogether divine conception of a spiritual universe of worshippers at one in the midst of a boundless variety. Yet such is the vitality of Christianity that it has resisted the very efforts of its own children to nullify its qualities, and remains as before, a spirit of light and a spirit of life, capable of endless expansion, ready to alter its form in order to co-operate with every human movement, and working out in every human soul who receives it some subtle phase of its beauty, some delicate shade of its tenderness, some new manifestation of its graces.

We have spoken so far of the religion of Christ in contact with human character: let us look at it in contact with some great human interests.

Take politics. Other religions have laid down political systems, and bound themselves to ideas of caste, to imperialism, or to socialism. The latest religion has woven into its body a most cumbrous arrangement of mankind and the nations of mankind. Consequently,



these religions, being tied to the transient, perished, or will perish, with the political systems to which they are bound.

Christianity never made this mistake. It refused to be mixed up with any political system, or to bind those who followed it down to any form of political union, as it had refused to bind them down to any particular form of religious union. Leaving itself perfectly free, it could therefore enter as a spirit of good into any form of government. And it did enter into all forms—patriarchal, military, feudal, monarchical, imperial, democratic—as a spirit which modified the evils of each, and developed their good. It is objected to Christianity that it does not touch on great political questions, such as the limits of obedience to a ruler or the duties of the State to the citizens, and therefore that it is not a religion for men; but it does not touch directly on these questions, because its object was to penetrate them all as an insensible influence. Had it declared itself imperialist or democratic, it would have been excluded from the one or from the other. But, entering into the hearts of men as a spirit of love, of aspiration after perfection, of justice and forgiveness, it crept from man to man, till in every nation there existed a body of men who had absorbed the spirit of Christ, who slowly brought about political regeneration through spiritual regeneration.

But because it has prevailed in countries where feudal systems and the tyrannies of caste have ruled, it has been accused of having been on the side of oppressors of the race. The objection is plausible, but it is unfair. Some distinction is surely to be made between a church made

into a political organ and Christianity itself. When the Church, as in France before the Revolution, became a mere adjunct to the throne, and threw in its lot with tyrants, it forswore its Christianity. When it established itself at Rome as a tyranny over men's souls, it turned upon its Founder and recrucified him. Moreover, if Christianity has been accused as the handmaid of oppression, it is at least just to look on the other side, and see if it has not been the inspirer of the noblest revolutions. All its fundamental ideas—the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of all men in Christ, the equality of all men before God, the individual responsibility of every human soul, the surrender of all things for others, the one necessity of salvation for all alike, emperor and peasant—are spiritual ideas which bear an easy translation into political ideas, and which, gathering strength, have proved the ruin of many tyrannies. If Christianity has any close relation with a distinct political idea, it is with the idea of a high democracy; and if, as some say, the world is irresistibly tending to democracy, there is nothing in Christianity to prevent its falling in with this political tendency. I see no limit to its expansion, should that take place. On the contrary, I think that it will take in democracy a farther and a more brilliant, a freer and more devotional development than ever it has yet done. The atmosphere will be more congenial to it.

Again, take art. Greek religion lent itself to sculpture, but after a time its ideas were exhausted. It afforded no universal range of subjects. Some way or another, human as it was, it was not human enough to enable it to last. It was of Greece: it was not of mankind.

The religion of Mohammed shut out all painting and sculpture of living forms from its sacred architecture. But the Romanesque and Gothic builders, with a strange instinct that in Christianity there was nothing irreligious, and that every act of human life, if done naturally, or for just ends, even if it were such an act as war, was a religious act, and that all the world, animate and inanimate, was holy to the Lord in Christ, filled porch and arcade and string-course with sculpture of all things in earth and heaven,—symbolized the revolving year, made parables of beauty and of terror, and threw into breathing stone the hopes, the passions, the fears, and the faith of Christian men.

This was but one field of the immense space which Christianity opened to religious art. No limitations were placed upon it by the religion. It was left to each nation, according to its genius, to develop it in its own way.

It was the same with poetry as with architecture. It lost nothing by the addition of the Christian element: it gained, on the contrary, a great subject. And that subject, in its infinite humanity, in the way it has of making those who grasp it largely interested in all things, in the majesty which belongs to it, does not prevent men from rising into the grand style,—that style which makes a man feel himself divine as he reads. On the contrary, of the three poets who, since Christ, have possessed this style in perfection, two employed all their power on subjects which belonged to Christian thought. The majesty of the subject reacted on their power of expression. They proved at least that Christianity does not exclude, but is expansive enough to include, the

art of poetry. Moreover, a religion which appeals to human feeling, which is nothing apart from Man, whose strongest impulse is the "enthusiasm of humanity," can never be apart from an art like that of poetry, which withers, corrupts, and dies when it is severed from the interests of men. One may even go further. Christianity has to do with the insoluble, with visions which love alone can realize, with questions to which the understanding gives no reply, with feelings which cannot be defined, only approached, in words. It is the very realm in which half of the poetry of the world has been written.

There is nothing, then, to prevent Christianity existing in harmonious relation with all true poetry from age to age of the world. In itself, it gives a grand subject to poetry, and both it and poetry have similar elements: their common appeal to, and their death apart from, human interests and feelings; their common life in a region above the understanding.

I need not dwell on the arts of music and painting. Let us pass on to science. Supposing Christianity had committed itself to any scientific statements or to any scientific method: it could never have been fitted to expand with the expansion of knowledge, to be a religion for a race which is continually advancing in scientific knowledge. If it had bound itself up with the knowledge of its time, it would naturally be subject now to repeated and ruinous blows. If it had anticipated the final discoveries of science, and revealed them, nobody would have believed it then, and nobody would probably believe it now. Christianity committed itself to nothing. "Yours is not my province," it said to science.

“Do your best in your own sphere, with a single eye to truth. I will do my best in mine. Let us not throw barriers in each other’s way. The less we obstruct each other, the more chance there is of our finding in the end union in the main ideas which regulate both our worlds in the mind of God.”

Foolish men have mixed it up with science, and endeavored to bind each down upon the bed of the other, to make science Christian, and Christianity scientific; but the result has always been a just rebellion on both sides. The worst evil has been the unhallowed and forced alliance of the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or of the infallibility of the Church, to Christianity. The moment science was truly born, war to the death arose against a form of Christianity which violated the original neutrality of Christianity toward the pure intellect and its pursuit of its own truths. But get rid of this alliance, and how is Christianity in opposition to science? What is to prevent its being a religion fit for man in that future when the youngest child will know more than the philosopher of to-day? It is no more in actual opposition to science than poetry is.

The river glideth at his own sweet will.

I suppose no scientific man would run a tilt at that. Its thought, its feeling, the impression it is intended to convey, are all out of the sphere of science. Nevertheless, the natural philosopher recognizes that it appeals to his imagination. He receives pleasure from it: he accepts it as true in its own sphere.

But, if he were told that the writer claimed infallibility for his expression, said that it expressed not only a cer-

tain touch of human feeling about the river, but also the very physical truth about the movement of the river, he would naturally be indignant. "You have left your own ground," he would say to the poet, "where you were supreme, and you have come into mine, where, by the very hypothesis of your art, you are a stranger. You claim my obedience, here, in my own kingdom, the absolute surrender of my reason in a realm where reason is the rightful lord. You may be a poet, but you are denying the first principles of your art.

Precisely the same might be said to those who are ill-informed enough to connect the spirit and life of Christianity with efforts to suppress physical science or historical criticism as tending to infidelity, or as weakening Christian truth. It might be said to them by a wise scholar: "You may be Christians, but you are doing all the harm you can to Christianity. You are endeavoring to bind an elastic and expanding spirit into a rigid mould, in which it will be suffocated. You are fettering your living truth to physical and historical theories which have been proved to be false and dead, and your Christianity will suffer as the living man suffered when the cruel king bound him to the corpse. Your special form of Christianity will grow corrupt, and die, for it attacks truth." But if some Christian people have gone out of their sphere, there are not wanting philosophers to do the same. "I know nothing of God and immortality," says science, and with an air as if that settled the question. "I should think you did not," Christianity would gravely answer: "No one ever imagined that you could, but I do. I do know a great deal about those wonderful realities; and I have given my knowledge of

them to millions of the human race, who have received it, proved it through toil and pain, and found it powerful to give life in the hour of death." "Proved it," answers science, "not in my way, the only way worth having, the way which makes a thing clear to the understanding." But there are hundreds of things which are not and cannot be submitted to such a proof. We cannot subject the action of any of the passions to the explanations of the understanding. By reasoning alone, we cannot say what an envious, jealous, self-sacrificing, or joyful man may do next, nor explain his previous actions. One might far more easily predict the actions of a madman.

We cannot give any reason for love at first sight, or, what is less rare, but as real, friendship at first sight. We cannot divide into compartments the heart and soul of any one person in the world, saying, This is the boundary of that feeling. So far, this quality will carry the man in life. For the understanding is but a secondary power in man. It can multiply distinctions. It cannot see the springs of life where the things are born about which it makes distinctions.

"Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops."

What tells us that is poetry? The voice of the understanding? "Night's candles are burnt out," it says: "it is a ridiculous statement of the fact that the stars have ceased to shine. Day never stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops. Is that poetry? It is nonsense." But the understanding rarely acts alone in this way: a higher power in man proves to him, he cannot tell how, that the lines are magnificent poetry,—nay, that the

poetry is in the very passages which the understanding despises.

Let each keep to their own spheres, and do their work therein. Christianity has no weapons in her original armory which can be wielded against science, and science cannot attack spiritual truths with purely intellectual weapons. No one asks for a spiritual proof that the earth goes round the sun: it is equally absurd to ask for a purely intellectual proof of the existence of an all-loving Father. And it would be wiser if science kept her hands off Christianity. Mankind will bear a great deal, but it will not long bear the denial of a God of love, the attempt to thieve away the hope of being perfect and our divine faith in immortality. These things are more precious than all physical discoveries. The efforts made to rob us of them, when they are made, and they are but rarely made, are not to be patiently endured. They are far less tolerable than the ill-advised attempts of Christian men to dominate over science. These latter efforts are absurd, but the former are degrading to human nature.

It really does not make much matter to the race in general whether the whole science of geology were proved to-morrow to have been proceeding on a wrong basis, or whether the present theory of force be true or not; but it would make the most serious matter to mankind, if they knew for certain to-morrow that there was no God of justice and love, or that immortality was a fond invention. The amount of suppressed and latent belief in these truths, which we should then discover in men, who now deny them, would be perhaps the strangest thing we should observe; but it hath not en-



tered into the heart of man to imagine the awfulness of the revolution which, following on this denial, would penetrate into every corner of human nature and human life.

Both science and Christianity have vital and precious truths of their own to give to men, and they can develop together without interfering with each other. Should science increase its present knowledge tenfold, there is nothing it can discover which will enable it to close up that region in man where the spirit communes in prayer and praise with its Father, where the longing for rest is content in the peace of forgiveness, where the desire of being perfect in unselfishness is satisfied by union with the activity of the unselfish God, where sorrow feels its burden lightened by divine sympathy, where strength is given to overcome evil, where, as decay and death grow upon the outward frame, the inner spirit begins to put forth its wings and to realize more nearly the eternal summer of his presence, in whom there is fulness of life in fulness of love. No: as Christianity can expand to fit into the progress of politics, and to adapt itself to the demands of art, so it can also throw away, without losing one feature of its original form, rather by returning to its purer type, all the elements opposed to the advance of science which men have added to its first simplicity.

It will be pleasant, if what I have said be true, for all of us to meet five hundred years hence, and, interchanging our tidings of the earth, to find that the thoughts and hopes of this sermon, in which many of you must sympathize, have not been proved untrue.

# THE CHANGED ASPECT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.\*

1873.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”—ST. JOHN xvi, 12.

THE foundation of Christian Theology is the revelation given by Jesus Christ with regard to God in his relation to man. It was the flower of the previous revelations, the concentration and completion of the theology of the past.

But did it do as much for the theology of the future, did it once for all give to man all the knowledge of God which he is to have hereafter? Our accredited teaching answers that question in the negative. We look forward to a time when Christ shall come a second time and close this dispensation, and we, freed from the barriers which darkly close us in, shall possess an immediate knowledge of God, see him as he is, know him even as we are known by him. The revelation of Christ, then, did not complete revelation.

But, again, the question arises, Is this future revelation to which we look to be a sudden, unprepared revealing of higher truths about God, or will it be the natural result of a slow development of truth? Will it be like

\* A sermon preached before the University of Oxford.

those sudden creations of new animal life and a new world which once were held to be true in geological science, or will it follow the analogy of the slow evolution which we know has ruled the progress of life and the changes of the face of the earth?

I believe in the latter view. It will be as much the easy and natural result of a continuous revelation which is now going on as the Revelation of Christ, eighteen hundred years ago, was the result of a revelation which had been going on for thousands of years before he came. It will not be a new building suddenly upraised from its foundations: it will be the last stone laid upon a building which God had been laying stone by stone from year to year. In idea, then, the progress of revelation is analogous to that which science teaches us about the progress of life, to that which we know of the progress of the race in history, of the progress of Art, of the progress of Knowledge. Everywhere there is continuity, evolution without a break; and in revelation it is the same.

Now, what position does the revelation given by Christ hold toward this continuous revelation? It gave, in complete statement, all that was needed at the time it was given, and that which was then given in this way will always be needed by man. But there was much in it which was not completely stated, much more than appeared to the men of that generation. It held in it not only clear thoughts, but germs of thought which were afterward to be developed; and in their slow and successive development consists the continuity of revelation.

At first, they remained asleep; but, as the elements

fitted to make them grow were added to the soil of the world, they grew up, one after another, trees of knowledge and of life, of whose fruits men took, and, eating, knew more of God, of their own being, and of their duties to their fellow-men. Many of these seeds are still asleep, and the future extension of revelation consists in their coming to the light as the conditions under which they can spring up are fulfilled in the progress of mankind. "I have yet many things to say to you," said Christ, "but ye cannot bear them now." And, again, "When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The principle is laid down in that text; for we ought not to give it a particular, but a universal interpretation. It was not said to the Apostles alone, but to all mankind in the persons of the Apostles.

It seems reasonable, then, to say that revelation is not completed, but being completed; that we look for higher knowledge of God, for larger moral views of his relation to us and of ours to him, as time goes on and mankind grows. Theology is not, then, a fixed science. God has not said his last word to us, nor Christ given his last counsel of perfection; nor has the Spirit yet shown to us the whole of truth. There is, then, a revelation in the past, the full meaning of which is being evolved in the progress of history.

We have reached a certain point in that development, and a clearly marked one,—the point at which theology is at last tending to become as unlimited in its statements about God and man as the statements of Christ were. To speak of that and of the duties it imposes on us will

fill up the second part of this sermon; but, first, I must discuss how it is that we have been so long in arriving at that point, and how we have arrived at it.

First, then, when Christ came on earth, he stated ideas which were universal in the sphere of religion, and which led directly to ideas universal in the sphere of politics. There was one universal Father, and all men of every nation were his children. There was therefore only one nation, the nation of mankind; and all were, because children of one Father, brothers to each other. And, because all were children and needing redemption, there was a universal education and a universal salvation. Beyond all the differences, then, of mankind, there was one spiritual country of which all were equally citizens, with equal duties and equal rights; and every citizen of that country had an unrestricted right to personal development and communion with God his Father. These are what I call universal ideas; and they bore an easy translation into the social and political life of classes and nations, and it was their fate to be so translated. But not at once: that was impossible. It is true they were so translated by the early Christians, on whom the ideas of the world around them had little power, in whose hearts still glowed the personal influence of the Saviour; but, the moment they passed from the narrow circle of the believers into contact with the Roman world, they not only ceased to be transferred to the social life of men, but they lost also their universal character. For, being universal, they could not be understood or received by a world to which all universal ideas were unknown except the idea of universal empire, and that one universal idea was in direct antagonism to

their spirit. The elements of the world then entered into Christianity and changed its form, and the main element of that world was Imperialism. It stole into the doctrines of the Church, and the idea of God in his relation to us was formed in accordance with the imperial idea with which Rome had impressed the world, and with the exclusive and particular ideas of that time. It stole into the polity of the Church, and it became imperial in spirit and in form; and the democratic element, as it has been called, in the ideas of Christ, was laid asleep for a time.

We may regret this, but we must not forget that it was necessary. If the Christian ideas were to enter men's hearts at all, they were obliged to take forms suited to the times. But in taking, both in doctrine and in polity, such forms, they were stripped of their universality. And they could not help this. To declare a universal doctrine of Fatherhood, Salvation and Brotherhood to a world steeped in the political and social theories of the Empire, would have been to suppress Christianity for a time. It had to be imperialistic, or it would not have been received.

That is one point, and another follows from it: that this form which the thoughts of Christ took in the Church was not the creation of the Church, half as much as it was the creation of the world which surrounded the Church. It was imposed on Christianity from without: the existing popular views necessarily made the garments of Christianity.

That was the fate of the outward revelation of Christ. Meantime, the ideas of Christ, though received under worldly forms, entered into men's hearts and did their

work there; and the inner revelation which is wrought out by the Spirit of God in men began to grow. The ideas of Christ were wide as the world, the form they took was narrow, but their universal spirit penetrated into the heart and set up a subtle and hidden resistance to their exclusive form. The Spirit took the things of Christ and showed them to men.

The same things are true with regard to intolerance and persecution. It became natural for the Church to insist on the opinions it held being received by all. Natural, because it was the fashion of the day in other realms than those of religion. Rome did not tolerate the expression of free opinion against its government. It searched it out, and ruthlessly put it down. No one thought that it did wrong in doing so. It was determined to force all nations into the Roman mould, to compel them to adopt and live by the Roman ideas. And this view of things naturally entered into Christianity, when it grew into form in a Church; and it would have been impossible for the Church to have been so far beyond its time as not to be as intolerant of difference of religious opinion as the State was of difference of political opinion, as not to have tried to force all men to believe the same things in the same way. It had to be intolerant and persecuting.

It has been held up to hatred because of this. But again I say, this was not the creation of the Church alone, but of the people also. The Church was intolerant and persecuting. What else could she be? It was the spirit of the whole time for centuries. If she alone had escaped that evil, it would have been miraculous. And tolerance would not have been understood,

and would have met then with universal blame.\* Not to force truth on men by every means in one's power, not to put away those who opposed it, would have argued that one did not care for truth, that in itself it was worthless. It is perhaps too great a paradox, and yet there is much truth in it, to say that it was necessary, in order that the spirit of Christ's tolerance should insensibly creep into men's hearts, that his ideas should for a time be clothed in the garment of intolerance. That was again the fate of the outer Revelation, but at the same time the ideas of Christ, even through this alien form, stole into the hearts of men, and wrought out, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a practical charity, even an international kindness unknown before. The seeds of tolerance, of free thought, and the love of it, were sown in the world. An inner revelation grew up in opposition to the form which the Church, influenced by worldly elements, had given to the revelation of Christ.

It would be too long now to show how the same kind of thing took place when that which has been called the Feudal System took form, and the aristocratic element which grew out of feudalism divided men sharply into classes, isolated them from each other, and crept into the conceptions of God and Heaven and Earth which both Protestant and Catholic set forward; and how, with this, intolerance and persecution grew stronger.

But again, as before, these elements of doctrine and practice were more the creation of the world than the Church. Again, as before, the ideas of Christ, though their form was worldly and evil, made way, and far

\* See the history of Theodoric.



more than before. Even in the Church itself, the religious orders spread far and wide more democratic views of man; and, both within and without the Church, a rapidly accumulating series of new impulses, collected by us now under the name of the Renaissance, tended toward freedom of thought, a larger charity and tolerance, and in religion produced men like Erasmus, whose teaching, almost as large as advanced modern thought, was also far larger than his time could receive.

On the whole, then, two things appear to be true. First, that the Revelation of Christ was taught by the Church through forms, both of doctrine and practice, which were created by the spirit of the world, and that it could not have been received at all, except it had been taught through these forms: that therefore the imperial and aristocratic elements in the Church were not created by the religious body acting alone, but by the whole spirit of the age. The priests were not, as their opponents say, the tyrants who invented these things: they were the mouthpieces of general opinion. It is said, As the priest, so the people: it is far truer to say, As the people, so the priest.

And it follows that these elements and the forms under which Christianity was represented were not then seen as evil by the people nor by the Church, but were considered good things.

Secondly, that, in spite of the forms in which the universal ideas of Christ were cast being evil, though not known as evil then, they entered into men's hearts, and in their slow growth is to be sought the real work of the Spirit of God in the development of Christianity. How shall I make it more clear? The direct influence

of Christianity had to be exercised through evil forms; but, since they were not looked upon as evil by the world of the time, its inner influence was not corrupted by them. But that inner, indirect influence in men's hearts worked against those forms, and slowly undermined them; and in the subtile, hidden growth of its ideas, and the living spiritual force they created, tending ever to a wider view of God's love to man, a larger view of the equal communion of man with man,—to the destruction of intolerance in religion and of oppressive systems in society, to the freedom of man's soul, and the freedom of all from every form of tyranny,—consists the revelation of God through Man in history, the true work of the Spirit of Christ, taking his things and showing them unto us. We look, then, to the ideas which the Spirit of God has evolved in history out of the seeds which Christ sowed for the truest form of his revelation, not to the forms into which the Church threw only a portion of the thoughts of Christ.

And, now, the resistance which this inner spirit of Christ's ideas had set up against the restrictive forms imposed on them from without gradually took more force to itself, passed from the inward to the outward, formulated itself in thought, set on fire no longer individuals, but masses of men, and became a revolutionary power in the world. Mixed as it was with much evil, it was indeed an angel which troubled the Bethesda pool of Europe; and it brought healing with it to the life of men. For it was the coming to the light of the true conceptions of Christ.

Sometimes, they took greater strength from the side of religion. A prophet came, or a priest turned into a

prophet and proclaimed them. Sometimes, on the other hand, they were pushed forward from the side of irreligion. Those in whom the ideas of Christ were working were often and naturally thrown into opposition to the Church when the Church joined itself to the oppressors of the people, or sought to exercise its own spiritual tyranny. Then these men became infidels; and we have the curious spectacle of those who denied Christ teaching the thoughts of Christ, blindly working the will of Heaven. But, from whatever source these ideas came, they grew and gathered strength as the years rolled on, till at last—in the proclamation that all men had equal duties which made equal rights, that there was but one nation, the nation of Mankind, one class, the class of Man, that all were brothers and citizens of one country, that all were free and bound to sacrifice their own good for the good of all, that caste and the whole range of systems bound up with it was a sin against the whole race—the universal ideas which Christ had given in religion took form in the social and political worlds, and the doom of imperial, aristocratic, exclusive theories in politics, society, and religion was sealed. Belshazzar in Church or in State alike looked up and saw the fiery letters grow on the walls of the world, which told him his time had come. At last, the inner revelation had come to the surface, and proclaimed itself as the Gospel of Man in the realms of social and political life. Then for the first time it became possible for the world to understand or receive a wide theology. For, in that long struggle, the ideas of the world, which were opposed to the universal spirit in those of Christ, were sifted, tried, exhausted,—that which was good in them wrought into, that which was bad in them wrought out of, the body of society.

Look round now upon the world. The spirit of the whole age is exactly contradictory of that which at its first contact with the world stripped Christianity of its universality; the leading ideas of the time have become, both here and in Europe, universal on the subject of Man; philosophers, historians, poets, and the mass of the people, have preached, and are full of these ideas: it has therefore become possible, for the first time in the history of the world, to have a theology which shall be universal in spirit, tolerant in practice, and adequate in its conception of God.

The doctrines of the universal Fatherhood of God, of the whole world as the Church of God in idea, and to become so in fact; of the education of every soul of man to perfection at last, since all are necessarily in God, and can never be finally divided from him; of universal Salvation, of universal Immortality; of the whole Race being held, sanctified, and redeemed in Christ; of the final glory, when all who have ever lived shall know their equal Brotherhood and do its duties, which universal love will make delight,—these have now for the first time become possible in theology, and all the doctrines which oppose or deny them are tottering to their fall. The force of that popular opinion which is the result of the work of God's Spirit in man is against them, and their days are numbered. We see already that political and social ideas, which are universal as regards man, are working their way into the theology of Europe, and re-creating its forms. For as the people and the spirit of the past had made the Church limited in thought and persecuting in practice, so now they will make it tolerant in practice and universal in thought. The-

ological ideas will slowly but surely harmonize themselves with the universal ideas in the social and political kingdoms, and we shall have a religion fitted for the farther growth of Man.

In fact, for the first time in history, and after a sustained battle, we have nearly worked up to the level at which Christ spoke. We stand upon his platform; we know what he meant when he said, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." There is a clear path of progress before us; and it will not be long before we may run along it with joy, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

This, then, is the point at which the world has arrived. This is our remarkable and unprecedented position in the history of religious progress.

But, though that is the position, there are few who recognize it, and scarcely any who occupy it with a knowledge of what is wanted.

That which is needed is a theology which will represent in its own realm and with equal breadth of view the ideas which have arisen with regard to Man, both in his social and political relations. It is wanted, because men, who have consciously adopted these ideas, or who unconsciously live by them and in their atmosphere, are desiring a religion and a theology which will not only enable them to link their views about mankind to God, but also supply them with a higher enthusiasm in the practical working of those views than irreligious philosophies of Man can give. For the first thing one feels in looking round on society is that there is no want of the desire to be religious, but that the desire despairs of finding a form in which it can clothe itself, and re-

mains, therefore, a vague aspiration, without ability to act or even sense to know itself.

Such men look naturally to the Church or to the various religious bodies of the country for some theology which they can harmonize with the universal ideas about Man, of which I have spoken; and the search is in vain. On the contrary, they find in the Church the old political and social ideas still retained, and in both the Church and Dissent religious ideas such as the salvation of only a few, which, wholly out of harmony with their view of Man, are yet imposed on them as necessary to believe, if they would be religious. The result is an immediate recoil from theology and even religion, violent in some, sorrowful in others, but resolute in both. Left utterly unhelped, feeling this irreconcilable antagonism, they become angry infidels or quiet sceptics. And this infidelity and scepticism is becoming more wide-spread day by day. It is unfortunate, but it cannot be helped; and it will continue, and must continue to spread, until the harmony I speak of is established, till the ideas of theology on God and Man are as universal in their sphere as those of the movement called the Revolution are on the subject of Man.

A few are trying to do this, but no class of thinkers, as a class, are doing it; and the result is that there is a dead-lock to-day between religion and life. There is no attempt to construct an adequate theology for the new world. We hear nothing but negations of what others hold, and one is very wearied of negations. "Every work of opposition is a negative work, and a negation is a nonentity. If I have called the bad bad, have I gained much? But, if by chance I called the good bad,

I have done a great evil. He who wishes to be of use to the world ought not to insult anything. That which is bad will die of itself; and our work is to build, and not to overthrow." But, in order to build, we want a plan; and we cannot make a plan till we know the wants of the world for which we build.

The Church makes various efforts, but none of them touch the time. Some are re-creating the Past and trying to fit it to the Present. It is pouring new wine into old bottles, and we can predict the result.

Some are trying to prove that Christianity is nothing but a high morality, and asking the unbelievers to find all they desire in that view. But men may have as high a morality as is necessary for life here, and be Atheists; and, unless the Church has something higher than morality to offer, it will give no help to the world. And, unless it has more than a high morality to offer, it has ceased to be Christian. For, as in all Art, so in Christianity, its direct end is not to make men moral, but to awaken in them those deep emotions, and to present to them those high ideals, which, felt and followed after, will not only indirectly produce morality, but aspiration and effort to do far more than men are absolutely bound to do by the moral law.

Some are saying that the religion for man is contained in the spirit of Christ's life,—in being gentle, kind, loving, true, and forgiving. I am sure that teaching of that kind alone will not put an end to scepticism. Men want a theology as well as a daily religion of "sweet reasonableness," want the intellect satisfied as well as the heart. They wish for ideas under which they can collect their thoughts with regard to the questions in-

volved in the relation between God and man, such as the Being of God, what Nature and Man and Evil are in relation to him, forgiveness of sins, immortality, the future fate of the race. It will not be enough to say to men asking for light on these subjects: "I can say nothing clearly. I do not know, but I can tell you to live the life of Christ." Why, the very thing which wearies them into scepticism is that they have no clear vision; and it does not help them to hear confessions of ignorance repeated. If we wish to lead, we must be able to assert something clearly; and that which we assert must be in harmony with those new thoughts about mankind which openly took form at the end of the last century.

Then we ask what Unbelief is doing. Is it helping the world? It has on one side deified negations; and to accustom the intellect and imagination to denial is to rob it finally of the power of construction. Nothing so retards the advance of the world as to put negations in the place of assertions, and to idolize them as if they were ideas. No idolatry is worse than that, no superstition is more degrading; and it is the general error of the infidel party. On the other side, those of them who have made a religion have taken out of it God and Immortality; and, though a few can bear the loss of these ideas, it leaves the mass of men without a centre for thought, without any support for noble emotions, without any courage or hope or faith in the future of Man. Again, as to the scientific unbelief, its present tendency is more and more toward Materialism; and, if that were once largely received by the unintelligent masses, it would rapidly tend to destroy ideas of any kind and their influence. And even those thoughts of a



common mankind, of one humanity, of equal duties owed to all, of the equal rights of all to self-development, which have done so much to civilize, soften, and ennoble Man, would after a time cease to have power, and finally cease to exist, were materialism to win the day. On the side of Unbelief, little is doing to set forward the world, much to retard it. For Philosophy and Art, Morality and Philanthropy, unless Religion and its enthusiasm exist alongside of them, dry up into mere systems, or take corrupt and even unnatural forms, which the world is obliged to get rid of in the end.

In every case, then, but little is doing to give a religion to the really powerful ideas, to those wider conceptions of Man which, first taken up in England by the poets, have now filled nearly every sphere of thought with their influence; and that nothing is doing is a great pity for the sake of the ideas themselves, for they only possess half their normal power without a religion in harmony with them; nor have we any notion how they would push their way, if they had a theology behind them which should represent them. Till that is done, we shall have our scepticism.

But those within the Church who see the position at which the world has arrived have a clear duty and a noble work to do. They have, first, to take away from theology, and especially from its idea of God and his relation to Man, all exclusive and limited conceptions, all also that are tainted by the influence of those ideas which crept into it from the spirit of the imperial, aristocratic, and intolerant ages. They have to harmonize theology by the progress of the world, by asserting in it ideas as universal with regard to Man and God as those

which the Spirit of God has taught the world with regard to man and his fellow-man. They have, in fact, to bring the outer teaching of Christ's revelation up to the level of that inner one which has now become outward in society and politics, to confess and accept this as the work of God; and, having done that, to look back to Christ's words and life, and say, "At last, we are free from perversions of his Thoughts; at last, we breathe his atmosphere; at last, we know what he meant; and, since this is what he meant in society, we will make our theology mean the same."

And, secondly, that, in accordance with this, their teaching in the Church should heartily, but temperately, go with the ideas which are collected round the words Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity; not serving the wild image which France made of them, but the image which an honest and a just idealism presents to our hope. Not that the Church should proclaim these social ideas as part of its teaching, for that is not its work, but that it should never hesitate to sympathize with them through, and by means of, its religious teaching; that it should cease to support with its voice all institutions and governments which oppress or hamper the free growth of the people; that it should set itself loose from the ideas of caste; that it at least should say, "I have nothing to do with upper, middle, or lower classes, but all men before me stand on the same ground, as sons of God and brothers of each other"; that it should pay no longer any special honor to wealth or rank for their own sake, but only see in any man his character as a member of Christ, and speak as much home to the vices and follies of rich and titled persons as to those of the poor, and

more sternly, inasmuch as it is more difficult to make them feel, owing to traditionary pride; that it should take its stand on ideas, not on custom; on principles, not on maxims; on love, not on law; that it should live, looking not to the Past and Present only, but chiefly to the Future of Mankind, and organize its action for the sake of the future; that it should not be too anxious to serve order, lest its power and wealth should be disturbed, whensoever, at least, it sees that the existing order of things is not a living order because it represents the best thoughts of the time, but only a negation of disorder; that it should not be afraid of what are called revolutionary thoughts, remembering that all revelations have given birth to revolutions, and that if Religion heads a revolution it becomes a reformation; and, finally, that it should get nearer in spirit and in life to him who was the intimate friend of the poor, whom the common people gladly heard, and who never hesitated one instant to proclaim ideas which he knew would overthrow the existing conditions of society.

To do these things with wisdom, foresight, firmness, remembering that he who believes does not make haste, but believing that God is educating all men to perfection, that Christ has redeemed all men, and will complete that redemption, that the Divine Spirit is now revealing more and more of Truth to the world, and that the world is growing by that truth, will rescue men from scepticism; and many years will not pass by before we know, even more fully than now, what Jesus meant when he said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

# THE LIBERTY OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM.\*

1871.

“Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.”— I. THESS. v., 21.

I AM going to-day to speak of the point in the late Privy Council judgment which affects the question of the liberty of Biblical criticism in the Church of England.

Some years ago, in the judgment pronounced in the case of the *Essays and Reviews*, a large freedom of interpretation and of criticism of the Bible was granted, or appeared to be granted, to the Church. That freedom was gratefully accepted, and freely used. The results have been remarkable. The Bible, approached in the same manner as we approach any other book, has gained in reality, in interest, and in power. Its human and its spiritual sides have both been brought into greater prominence. Its literary and intellectual interest has been more widely recognized. It has become not less the book of religious circles, but more the book of Humanity. And these gains have been in proportion to the loss of those mystical and infallible qualities which have been imputed to it in the past, and which had

\*A sermon suggested by the judgment pronounced in the case of Mr. Voysey.

relegated it to a region in which all exercise of the reason upon it was pronounced either impious or dangerous. No true book suffers from being removed out of the misty valley of superstition and placed in the mountain air of honest inquiry; and the Bible is not less revered or loved by us, but more, now that we have subjected it for some years to the ordinary critical tests. The pure gold of the book shines brighter, and is recognized more quickly, now that we try to separate it from the alloy; and the alloy itself has become interesting for its historical and human value. Formerly, when both were considered equally divine, both suffered from the confusion. It is easy to see what follows when alloy is maintained to be gold, and gold to be alloy.

Well, it has seemed to many, both within and without the liberal ranks, that the late judgment takes away from us this freedom. It appears to them to say, first, that no passage in the Scriptures may be subject to free criticism which relates to faith or morals; secondly, that no passage may be so interpreted as to contradict another; and, thirdly, that no individual criticism is allowable at all, and that this last restriction is in fact a death-blow to criticism altogether.

But criticism has already done its work; and what are its sure results?

According to any true principle of interpretation, the books of the Bible must be subjected to the same tests as all other books. Are there passages which belong to the sphere of physics? Then they are to be subjected to precisely the same strict inquiry as any physical hypothesis is subjected to by a natural philosopher; and, as they answer the inquiry, they are to be accepted as true or rejected as erroneous.

Many of the Biblical statements have not stood that test; and at once we come to the conclusion that, whatever inspiration may mean, it does not include infallibility on these points. We deny that the writers knew more on these subjects than any other men of the time at which they wrote. The discovery of Galileo, in fact, settled this point.

Unfortunately, the idea of a Biblical infallibility still lingers among men, and the spiritual power of the Bible is still involved with its accuracy on physical questions. Whether the question be one of geology, or a new theory of species, or the descent and age of man, there is still a battle to save this book from being pronounced in error, a series of reconciliations are still proposed.

These attempted reconciliations only serve to bring the Bible into discredit, partly because, as science goes on, they are one by one proved inadequate, partly because they contradict and disprove one another, and wholly because they all try to make the words of Scripture mean something else than a common-sense interpretation, such as we would give to the same statements in any other book, would lead us to adopt. They seem to me waste of time and labor in support of a wrong notion. I do not say that it is a matter of indifference to me whether the Bible be proved in accordance with modern science or not; for I should feel, if it were in accordance with modern science, that the wisdom of Inspiration might be fairly challenged. To link modern knowledge to a spiritual revelation given to men who had no modern knowledge would have injured their reception of that revelation. If Moses had told the people of Israel that the earth went round the sun in the same breath as

he told them that the Lord their God was one Lord, the total incredibility with which they would receive the first would lead them to be as incredulous of the second. A revelation must be given in accordance with the knowledge of the time, or it will be rejected. On distinct grounds, its truth and its use are outside of the sphere of physical truth.

Under this head comes, of course, the very important question of miracles. Miracles seem to directly contradict the root theories of science. There are many factors in the question, which have to be discussed in any thorough treatment of it: whether natural sequence really and necessarily is invariable; whether matter really exists, or is essentially nothing but force; and then whether force is anything but will or thought; and then whether the whole universe is not actually the will or thought of God. And, should the latter ever admit of proof, then the miracle would certainly seem to be thinkable, and therefore less improbable than the existence of matter, which most people accept, but which is philosophically unthinkable. Be our theories about miracle, however, what they may, as a miracle is plainly something out of the ordinary sequence of things, any alleged miracle ought to be most severely investigated; and, if any other explanation than a miraculous one is fairly allowable, that explanation ought to be received. I claim the freedom of criticism, therefore, on the miraculous element in the Bible, because, unless the question be discussed with liberty, we shall never arrive at any intellectual certainty on the possibility, for instance, of a miracle like the Resurrection.

Passing to another point, we claim the liberty to sub-

mit to free criticism the historical portions of the sacred Scriptures. Things necessary to salvation we believe, but it can hardly be said that a belief in the infallible accuracy of the whole history is necessary to salvation. Moreover, if such a belief is demanded of us, one proved inaccuracy is fatal to the whole; and it is almost ridiculous to bind up the historical reality of the account of the Passion of Christ with the historical reality of the story of the dispersion at Babel.

Criticism has proved that there are discrepancies in the historical books; it has rendered it more than probable that the more archaic narratives in Genesis and elsewhere are of little historical value; it has shown that the authors of many of the books were not contemporaries of the events narrated, and that the details are necessarily traditional, and share in the uncertainty of traditions.

Whatever inspiration means, it does not guarantee historical infallibility; and the history of the Bible is open to the same sort of criticism as that which we bestow on any other history.

Such criticism — once we have laid aside the theory of infallible inspiration — has not in its results done any wrong to the Bible, but the contrary. The book is not less, but more, revered by us, now that it makes no longer impossible claims on our belief. The critical and careful laying aside of that which we found mistaken, temporary, and local in it, has brought out more clearly than before that which is divine, spiritual, and permanent in it. And the historical record, freed from the superstitious claims made for it, has given up that which is true in it, and become of the greatest possible interest and value.



If it is no longer lawful, for example, to say that Saint Paul changed his opinion on some points as he grew older, so that passages in his later Epistles appear to be at variance with passages in his earlier Epistles; if we can no longer point out the differences which exist between the first three and the fourth Gospels, differences which I myself think can be embraced into a unity, but which apparently exist; if criticism be not allowed to play freely round these and similar points,—then we are simply put back to the time when men forgot the spirit and life of the sacred Scriptures in a theory of their infallibility, when reason was sacrificed to a superstitious idea of an inspiration which was independent of the writer's character and growth, when interpreters, instead of asking what the writer really meant when he wrote, set themselves to force the expressions of the writer into what they wished him to say.

And, as to discrepancies and contradictions, if it is incumbent on us to say, in the face of the Scriptures themselves, that there is no discrepancy between, for instance, the two accounts of the flood in Genesis, or no inconsistencies in the narrative of the Gospels, or nothing irreconcilable in the genealogies of Christ; or that there are no contradictions between the Books of Kings and Chronicles; if we are forced to begin again the old miserable, useless labor of harmonizing and reconciling accounts, with the clear knowledge now, not only that they cannot be perfectly harmonized, but also that, if they could, it would be fruitless work,—then we are indeed depraving our teaching of the Bible by uniting it to falsehood in ourselves, and depraving the Bible itself.

The whole question of the authorship of the books

both of the Old and New Testaments must also be left open. It cannot be suppressed by any pretence that it does not exist. In the case of the Old Testament, it has been already far and wide assumed that the authorship of the books is an open question. No one denies that the books are canonical, but we have felt quite free to discuss the date of composition of the several books of the Pentateuch and the various ages of their fragments; to divide Isaiah as we have it between the prophet of that name and another writer of the Captivity; to trace insertions from earlier times in Isaiah and the various prophets; to relegate Ecclesiastes to a much later date than Solomon; to freely treat the authorship of all the books as a question to be determined by historical criticism. The judgment has not pronounced against this liberty of ours with regard to the Old Testament, and we now claim the same liberty with regard to the authorship of the books of the New Testament.

The notion that their authority as a rule of faith depends entirely on their authenticity arises out of the theory of a special inspiration differing in kind from that given to other good and holy men, a notion wholly, I think, unsupported by the Scriptures themselves. That the writers were inspired by God, I believe to be true; that holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, I believe to be true: but were only those inspired whose names are handed down to us, does God inspire no one now, do no men speak now moved by the Holy Ghost? Many do so, for God has not ceased to act on men.

The next and last thing I shall discuss is the inference which some have drawn from the judgment that we are

not permitted to explain any passage *having reference to faith or morals* in a sense at variance with any other. But we need not trouble ourselves about inferences. A judgment such as this speaks only, of course, of that which lies before it. Nor, indeed, could the judgment intend that such an inference should be drawn by any one. If it meant its words to have full value on this point, they would directly take away the power of stating views about the Scriptures which the Scriptures themselves encourage us to state.

Take, first, questions of faith. The doctrine of Immortality is a question of faith. We hear nothing of immortality in the earlier books of the Old Testament. There are even passages which apparently deny it along with others which apparently assert it. It would be difficult, for example, to say that this passage in Hezekiah's prayer, "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth," is not somewhat at variance with "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

The doctrine of a Sacrifice for Sins is a matter of faith, but the mode in which the Old Testament conceived it during the Mosaic dispensation is expressly said in the Epistle to the Hebrews to be replaced by another, "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." And when a covenant is expressly declared to be made old, as it is in this Epistle, to be decayed and ready to vanish away before a new one, it can scarcely be denied that there are some things in the old with which the new may be at variance.

The doctrine declared in the second commandment

that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children was a matter of faith to those to whom it was given. But the prophet Ezekiel, having reached a higher spiritual level, directly contradicts it; and it is said that the whole chapter (the eighteenth) was so startling to the Masters of the Synagogue, as seeming to contradict the Pentateuch, that they hesitated to include Ezekiel in the canon. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." "As I live, saith the Lord God, there shall be no more this proverb in the house of Israel." "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." In fact, the chapter itself, as a whole; and the history of the dismay of the Rabbis at its repugnancy to another part of sacred Scripture is a death-blow to such a statement as some suppose they ought to infer from the judgment.

We claim then, on the ground of the sacred Scriptures themselves, liberty to contrast passages in them which pertain to matters of faith with other passages, and to say that they may be at variance with one another; and that this is, on the supposition of a progressive revelation, necessarily so.

Again, with regard to matters of morals. The relations of wife to husband are a matter of morality. Christ himself reverses the Mosaic conception, and replaces it by the ideal one. "And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. And Jesus answered, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." And then he reverses the

precept in "a counsel of perfection," ending with this phrase, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

It was lawful under the Mosaic law to claim an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and orders are said to be given by God to the Israelites "not to seek the peace or the good of their enemies, the Moabites, forever. Christ reverses both these when he says, "Love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to them that hate you," in another counsel of perfection.

The keeping of the Sabbath is considered part of the moral law. The mode of keeping it enjoined in the Pentateuch is put aside even in the Prophets, is decidedly put aside in the Gospels, is still more decidedly put aside in the Epistles. "Ye observe days and months and times and years," said Saint Paul. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain." That is a passage which can hardly be said not to be at variance with a hundred passages in the Old Testament.

We claim, then, the right which the Scriptures themselves give us to interpret passages which relate to moral action in a manner repugnant to others, when those others are plainly at variance with the highest morality taught us in the Bible. We say that we must expect this variance; for Christ has taught us, and the Epistles in various passages carry out this teaching, that the revelation given in the Bible is a progressive revelation.

Now, a progressive revelation assumes that the revelation given is proportioned to the moral sense of those who receive it. As much and no more than they *can aspire to* is given. To give the morality of the Gospels to the savage and ignorant Jews of the desert would

have been absurd. It would have been like giving to a boy who has just mastered the first book of Euclid the Principia of Newton as his next study. To ask of Joshua's army that it should do good to its enemies would have been as much out of the question.

The morality taught in the Pentateuch is the morality of a primer: the morality of the earlier Psalms is higher, the morality of the Prophets is higher still. As the nation advanced through the revelation given,—the revelation being always somewhat in advance of the natural morality,—new revelations, higher and higher still, each containing the germs of that which was to follow it, grew up in the minds of the best men, under the work of God's Spirit, and were given through them to the people; and the conclusion is that we must not demand more from the nation or the writings than the time allows us, we must not ask the morality of Isaiah from Samuel, nor the morality of Saint John from Isaiah. We must expect to find many things in the earlier books of the Old Testament at variance with the morality of the Prophets, still more at variance with the morality of the Gospels. We have an actual right, then, from our Christian point of view, to say that many things attributed to God in the Old Testament, such as the commands to utterly annihilate the Canaanites, are wrongly attributed to God, and that many things called good, as when Jael is blessed for the slaughter of Sisera, and others, are the product of the imperfect morality of the time, though we must also remember, first, how divine the morality is which is mixed up with these things, how far beyond anything we possess in books of contemporary or even of later age are the leading truths of revelation

in the several Old Testament books; and, secondly, that these things in which we see a morality at variance with that of the Gospels were not unnatural nor horrible at the time, and that, if we had lived ourselves at the time, our conscience would not have been violated by them at all. Nay, it would be quite possible for some of us in a moment of passionate patriotism to sing as Deborah did, and to break into praise of one who should assassinate a tyrant as doing the work of God, as some did here when Orsini made his attempt. Nor have we quite forgotten how not very long ago we claimed our merciless slaughter of the Hindoos, in which whole villages of innocent persons suffered, as the vengeance of God himself.

On the ground, then, that the revelation given in the Bible is a progressive one with regard to faith and morals, passing from less perfect to more perfect, and on the authority of the Bible itself, we claim the right to a free criticism of passages relating to faith and morals, taking in this case as our standard the ideal of faith and morality given in the accepted teaching of Christ. We claim the right to say that it is, in itself, a depraving of Scripture and a denial of its whole idea of the progressive disclosure of more and more perfect things to take without any modification many of the statements of the Old Testament as binding now on faith and morals, or to understand many passages as not at variance with the faith and morals revealed to us in the received teaching of Christ.

It may be thought that the whole of this statement contradicts the seventh Article, in which it is said that the Old Testament is not contrary to the New. It is

not so: the whole argument is based on that continuity of a progressive revelation which asserts that the revelation in the Old Testament contained the germs out of which developed, century after century, the revelation in the New. The New Testament fulfils, explains, and completes the Old. One spirit, one set of truths, run through both. But that by no means implies that everything in the one is in strict accordance, on subjects of faith and morals, with everything in the other, or that everything in the books of each, on such subjects, is in accordance. On the contrary, it implies that such accordance cannot be. The tree, at each stage of its growth, differs from the sapling, though the same life and the same idea runs through all its stages, though every stage of its growth supposes the next.

You may say, How am I in this difficulty to judge as to what is permanent or not, divine or not, necessary to salvation or not in the Bible? All authority is taken away from me. Not quite: there is the moral consensus of the time in which you live, a consensus which has been developed by the slow action of Christianity upon the world, and which is, in itself, I believe, the work of the divine spirit of God on humanity. Any plain contradiction of that consensus, whether in faith or morals, in the Bible, cannot be in it of divine or permanent value. We are bound to reject it as part of the rule of faith, unless we deny that our present standard of morality is the work of God, a denial which would be practical atheism.

Ultimately, in our personal life, the appeal for authority is made to the spirit of God in us, who verifies for us his own work. But he verifies it in no preternatural



manner, but through the means of spiritual organs, which he assists in their work. What are these "verifying faculties," to adopt a term from a well-known writer? Here are some of them: "He that loveth knoweth God." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "He that is of the truth heareth my voice."

These are the faculties whereby we discern the things of the spirit of God in the Bible,—a loving and a pure heart; obedience to the known will of God; the childlike spirit; the being of the truth: to these, the Bible is an open book; and he who possesses them, and in whom God's spirit is developing them day by day, needs no outward authority. Of his own self, he determines what is necessary or not necessary to believe in the Scriptures.

A good deal has been said about the evils of destructive criticism. I do not like criticism the aim of which is destruction, not truth. But its evils are those which time most surely cures, and truth is not destroyed. Destructive criticism, when it becomes licentious, cuts its own throat; and it is better to let it arrive at this conclusion. If you wish to keep its evils alive, the best way to do that is to persecute it. If you wish it to produce good results by a kind of reflex action, let it have its course,—watch it, seize the hints it gives you, let it tell you what is really dead in the things it criticises, and build up for yourselves a firm edifice of true things by constructive criticism.

Destructive criticism has its evils, but none so great as

the evils which follow on forbidding criticism altogether. To put the clergy back into a position where they will have to continually twist their intellect awry and to violate the morality of common-sense and to suppress the truth, in order to appear to get over Biblical difficulties, is to encourage a sort of criticism which, far more rapidly than any infidel criticism, will destroy with the laity not only any respect for the clergy,—and that is not unimportant,—but any reverence for the book which the clergy are asked to maltreat in the name of Truth.

The time has come when silence on the known results of criticism or on unfinished critical inquiries is no longer right or prudent. Even if we would, we cannot now leave to men and women their old opinions. The matter is taken out of our hands. The questions which criticism debates are debated in every workshop, in every drawing-room. And are the clergy the only persons on whom silence is to be imposed,—we, who ought to be beforehand and not behindhand in such discussion on things dear to us? When all the world is inquiring, is the pulpit to be the only place where inquiry is forbidden? Are we, part of whose business is Biblical interpretation, to ignore all the efforts of the laity to understand the Bible? When a Christian ministry lags behind the knowledge of the time, it must soon come to an end; and its end will be swifter, hastened by a just contempt, if it is believed to know truth and to suppress it, if it is open to the charge of loving truth less than its opinions. It would be, indeed, a deadly blow to the Church of England if this judgment meant, as some think it means, that all searchers for truth have no business within its pale.

I cannot think that the judgment means this, and we wait to know clearly what it does mean. But meantime we cannot be silent.

We call upon all, ministers and people, to inquire after truth, and to hold it as the first of virtues without which all other virtues become corrupt. We have no sympathy with its intemperate pursuit, nor with the notion that overthrowing everything is the way to find it. It ought to be pursued by a slow, sober, just, patient effort, based upon the principle that in all error there is a grain of truth hidden by which the error lives, the loss of which grain, by our heady violence, will vitiate our conclusion. We shall not be afraid of facing criticism on the Scriptures; but we should subject criticism itself to critical tests, and weigh its conclusions well. Nothing is easier than destructive criticism, and nothing is more intellectually contemptible than the hasty acceptance of its inferences by persons whose delight is to contradict received opinions. The sudden determination of questions which have employed the intellect of centuries by men who have a constitutional infirmity of seeing only one side of a thing is an insolence done to the love of truth. A slow sobriety in balancing the results of criticism, and in judgment, is one of our greatest wants. There is no need of hurry. We have an eternity before us in which to arrive at truth; but, because we have eternity before us, we must not neglect the endeavor to discover truth: for such neglect will have its results in the enfeebling of the organs by which truth is found; and neither in this world nor in the next is knowledge given to feebleness. The Bible will not lose, but gain, from the process de-

voutly but sternly performed. Its truths, as they appear, freed from the mist of human error, will be all the more dear to us because they have been told to us by men who shared in our common humanity. It will no longer be set up as the opponent of reason, but as in harmony with it; and, the intellect satisfied, will leave free room to the spirit to receive its wise and tender lessons. It will speak to the heart in the heart's own language. Its human lives, and the history of their guidance by God, will tell us that we are also guided and cared for by him. The principles of its profound national morality, as declared by the Prophets, will pass into our national life. Its psalms and prayers will express for us the wants and sorrow and joy of our souls, and deepen, by expression, our religious life. Its history of the continuity of religious life will unite us to the whole past of humanity, and, while it makes us at one with Abraham and David and Isaiah, teach us to be at one with Socrates and Aurelius and Confucius. And its central figure Christ, where all these things meet and mingle into sinless unity,—where the Fatherhood of God and the Sonhood of Humanity reveal themselves; where all that is divine is made human, and all that is truly human is exalted to the divine; where the past revelation fulfilled its imperfections, and in whom the future revelation is contained in germ,—in whom Love and Truth and Purity met together to give us a personal revelation of the character of God, will have his redeeming, consoling, and exalting power on our souls.

But any attempt to maintain opinions about the Bible which science is every day proving more and more to be erroneous and absurd, and any attempt to check inquiry,

can only bring down manifold disasters upon the Church. The stream of freed Biblical criticism once let loose cannot now be dammed up without danger. Its waters will collect behind the dam, and the feeble barrier will give way. But, in the rush of the conglomerated waters, not only the barrier, but the very foundations of the present constitution of the Church, may be swept away.

## THE ATONEMENT.

1871.

“Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.”—PSALM iii., 1, 2, 3, 4.

THIS is a morning psalm, as the fourth, which follows it, is an evening psalm. There is a high probability that the tradition which refers them both to the time when David fled from Absalom's advance to Mahanaim is a true tradition. The third psalm would then belong to the first morning after that on which David left Jerusalem, and the fourth to the evening following.

David left Jerusalem early in the morning. He passed through the outskirts, over the brook Kidron, and took the ascent of Olivet, amid the loud wailing of the people of the city. He reached the mountain-top at noon: there he met Hushai, and sent him back to confound the counsel of Ahitophel. As he descended the rugged path on the other side, there rained upon his head the stones and curses of Shimei, adding their store of sorrow to that which was too much. It was not till evening fell that he reached the ford of Jordan.

There he snatched a short slumber, while he waited

for the news of how things were going in Jerusalem. "I laid me down, and slept." At midnight, he was roused with the message, "All is safe for a time; the pursuit is delayed; get over the river at once to Mahanaim." David sprang to his feet, his old energy returning. "I rose up again, for the Lord sustained me"; and at break of day they had all reached the other side in safety.

Then, as the sun rose, making into a blaze of glory all the dew-drenched western bank,—seeming like God's summons to activity,—David's impulsive poet-heart began to thrill with gratitude and courage, and this psalm rushed in a moment to his lips.

If this be true, a vivid interest draws us to the psalm. It is the unpremeditated expression of the passionate feeling of a great man's heart at a great crisis in his life. We seem to look for a moment into his inmost heart.

It is in times like these that we see character. Men are true when passion is profound. The first agony of sorrow wears no mask. Anger, at its fiercest, lays the secrets of the heart bare. Fear is a magic glass, through which we see the long-hidden evil or weakness of the soul. Joy at deliverance has the same power.

This is still more true when the character is impulsive, and the impulsiveness is under the power of a strong will. Such a character had David,—impulsive, always ready to gratify or express the feelings of the moment, but capable now and then of holding them in with the steadiest curb. When the curb was withdrawn by the will, then, only observe how most of his psalms burst out with a cry, like the leap forward of a beautiful wild animal held in bonds too long.

And David's passion and David's impulsiveness, now at their height, swelled by the repression of twenty-four hours,—swelled by an awful sorrow, swelled by a terrible anger,—were suddenly let loose by the sense of safety. He looked round upon his followers, and rejoiced; he felt the exhilaration of the morning; he saw the sun rise, like hope, after a night of storms. Silence seemed shameful in that moment, and the psalm arose into life.

How the words came rushing like waters. "Jehovah!"—mark the cry at the beginning,—“how many are become my oppressors; many are they that rise against me. Many say of my soul, No help has he in God.”

But yesterday a king, and now an exile. Only yesterday in his own city, the people weeping for love and sorrow round him! What were they doing now? And David heard, in the ear of his imagination, the shouts which welcomed Absalom, the darling of the people: “The king is dead. Long live the king!” fancied the sneer and scoff which circulated among the rebel officers; caught the sleek murmur of Ahitophel's insidious, hateful voice; and saw with startling distinctness among the crowd the face of Shimei sharpened with hate. He realized the thought which gleamed in every eye and hung on every lip. “They say of my soul,” he cried, “there is no help for him in God!”

Such is the judgment of the world. *Misfortune means God's anger.* Is that judgment true? That is the first question the psalm suggests.

We answer, first, that God is never angry in our sense of the word. Sacred indignation at evil is inseparable from his being, because it is the natural repulsion of



holiness from sin ; but from this we must, so far as we can in thought, remove all suspicion of angry passion. It is all but impossible for us to do this, for it is so rarely in our lives that we feel unmixed indignation. Jealousy steps in ; sometimes fear, sometimes a wish to display, sometimes wounded vanity, sometimes selfish motives, till at last, or in a moment, indignation is degraded into violence, and violent passion brings about revenge.

It is owing to this almost necessary inability to conceive pure indignation that the idea of God's wrathful anger has taken such lodgement in the heart of men. Few superstitions — I call it such, for it is born of ignorance and fear — have ever done more harm in the world. It lay at the root of the popular cry which forced persecution on the Roman governors ; the gods were jealous of their honor. It has lain at the root of all persecutions : of the cruelties of the inquisitors, who attributed to God the desire to revenge himself upon the Jews, and the nursing of endless rancor against heretics ; of the persecution of those sects who represented God as vindictive, vain, and touchy. It has lain at the root of the perishing doctrine of eternal punishment.

It is *the* superstition which the Church of Christ ought above all to cast out now. It is the thing above all else on which we want clear notions.

How shall I best explain it, illustrate it ? What is God's indignation ? It is love doing justice. Suppose that you saw in the streets a brutalized man beating a woman : your feeling would be indignation, you would inflict punishment ; but there would be, for the most

part, feelings of contempt, of violent anger, of horror, combined with your indignation. In vindicating the woman's cause, there would be no pity for the man. That is anger doing justice. But the indignation of God would punish as severely as you, more severely in the end; but there would be no anger in the sense of passion; and there would be infinite pity, compassion, and love for the man, more so than even for the woman. "So lost, so brutalized, so fallen,—my son, I must redeem him." This is love doing justice: this is the indignation of God. The offender is punished, the sin is abhorred, but the offender is not detested: the tie of Fatherhood is not dissolved, the necessity of saving the lost is not forgotten. "You have done this wrong," God says to you and me: "you must suffer for it. I am a consuming fire to your evil. But I do not love you less: my love is shown in insisting on the punishment. For the pain points to the disease, and says to you, 'Get rid of the evil thing, or you die.'"

Moreover, anger like ours is capricious, easily roused, easily lost; punishes too much or too little; does not fit the punishment to the guilt, so that it may seem natural to the guilty and touch the conscience, but takes whatever punishment lies next to hand. Want of justice, want of balancing all the motives and circumstances on both sides, want of natural fitness, characterize the inflictions of our anger; for it has no time for all this slow work, and no thoughtfulness. Let it wait to work or think, and it ebbs away like Esau's, or quickens into revengefulness like Saul's.

There is an absolute freedom from all these faults in the indignation of God, and it is this which gives it its

awfulness. It is based on law, or, I should say, on the eternal truthfulness of God to himself. If God ceased to punish wrong-doing, he would cease to be God; if he did not apportion the exact measure of punishment to the wrong, making it the natural result, and felt as such, of the sin; if he did not see the wrong in all its excuses and all its aggravations, and make both tell, and be felt as telling, in the punishment, he could not be the just Omniscient Being we conceive him to be. If he acted hastily, and without full thought of the results of the punishment upon the character of the person punished, we could not believe in his love.

It is not, remember, that indignation is modified by love, or love modified by justice: there are no argumentative elements in God's nature, things which plead and reply, and replead and re-reply within him. If we had more reverence for God's unity, we should be more indignant at representations of him which make his heart like a court of law, in which his attributes are advocates for and against the criminal. His love is his justice, his justice is his love, his mercy is both love and justice, and his indignation is the inevitable expression (according to the unalterable nature of his being) of his character in contact with sin in the persons of his children. It is punishment; but it must be merciful as well as just punishment.

So far, then, the fact of misfortune coming to a man proves that he has erred against some law, and that, in consequence, God is indignant with him. It may be only his own unconscious transgression of some physical law, or it may be that his parents have transgressed some law of health. In that case, the indignation of God

carries with it no moral blame : it is simply the expression of law. It may be that he has erred against his own sense of the moral law, and that remorse has followed ; or that he has knowingly broken some physical law by excess, and that disease has followed. In that case, he recognizes himself that the spiritual or the temporal misfortune proves that God is indignant with him ; but it does not prove that God has ceased to love him,—least of all, that he has forgotten him. It proves the exact contrary. Wherever there is indignation, there must be his love ; wherever there is punishment, there must be his remembrance.

The cry of the Jewish world, “There is no help for David in God,” was hopelessly wrong ; and the really noble and grand thing, as we shall see, was that in the very midst of the punishment David knew that they were wrong.

But there is another answer to the question, Does misfortune prove God’s anger? In the case of the guilty, it proves, as we have seen, God’s indignation. But, in the case of the innocent, it proves God’s love for the race. Suppose an innocent man suffers : what has often been the verdict of the world? It says, “There is a crime beneath the seeming innocence, or he would not suffer.” That was the judgment of the friends of Job, and the Book of Job gives the Old Testament answer to this blind opinion. The complete answer is in the death and suffering of Christ. It has been written there for all the world to read that its stupid maxim is wrong. Suffering does *not* always prove God’s anger, nor prove the sufferer’s sin. If increase of love were possible, never did the Father so deeply love the Son as at the

hour of the cross; if increase of righteousness were possible, never was the Son more sinless than in that hour of human agony and apparent defeat.

Nevertheless, it is astonishing how strongly this superstitious view of God's anger clings to the minds of men. It has vitiated the whole view taken of the atonement by large numbers of the Church of Christ. They are unconsciously influenced by the thought that where there is suffering there must be sin. The cross is suffering: therefore, somewhere about the sufferer there must be sin, and God must be angry. But Christ had no sin: then what does the suffering mean? Their suppressed premise, the maxim, puts them into a sad dilemma.

At last, light comes to them,—not spiritual, but logical light,—and the thing is clear. Man sins; and sin against an Infinite Being is infinite, and deserving of infinite punishment. A debate takes place in the nature of God. Justice says: "I must punish. I will take the law." Mercy replies, "Have pity!" "No," answers Justice: "I must have my bond." Then Love steps in. "Is there no way to make mercy and justice at one? The Son of God is infinite. Let him bear as man the infinite punishment; let the sins of the race lie upon him; let Justice exact from him the forfeited bond; let God's anger be poured upon his head. Then, Justice being satisfied, Mercy can have her gracious way." And this was done; and the cross is no exception to the maxim, Where there is suffering, there is God's anger. I do not say that this theory was consciously elaborated out of the maxim, but it is certainly its child. It wears on its brow the traces of its worldly paternity. It is entirely a work of the mere reasoning faculty, though a special

spirituality is curiously claimed for it. There is not a trace of an intuition in it. The intuitions are all against it. It outrages the moral sense: if I murdered a man to-morrow, would justice be satisfied if my brother came forward and offered to be put to death in my stead? It outrages the heart. It makes a Father who is perfect love pour his wrath upon a guiltless Son at the moment when the Son in perfect love chose to die for men. It outrages our idea of God. It makes him satisfied with a fiction. It makes his notion of justice totally different from that which he has given us. It represents the All-Wise as in a painful dilemma, out of which he can only escape by a subterfuge. It divides his nature, setting one part of it in opposition with another,—mercy against justice,—and so destroys all conception of his self-unity.

It is altogether so crowded with inconsistencies, though so logical if the premises are allowed, that I know no greater proof of the utter incapability of the mere intellect to deal with spiritual things, no greater proof of the truth of the text, "The natural man understandeth not the things of the spirit, for they are spiritually discerned," than the wide prevalence of this forensic view of the Atonement. For this theory is only the work of the understanding,—only the work, not of the spiritual but of the natural man,—in the minds of the many noble and Christian men who hold it.

Having rejected this theory, we repeat our question, What does misfortune, suffering, coming to *the innocent*, mean? We have seen that it cannot mean, as in the former case, God's moral indignation. It means the exhibition to the world, when the suffering is voluntary,

even when it is involuntary, of the central principle of God's life, the revelation to men that self-sacrifice is life eternal; and, inasmuch as this revelation redeems man, it means God's love to the race of man. This is the lesson of the Cross. For what is Christ crucified? It is the declaration in time of the eternal self-giving of God, — of life forever given away that all may live.

For the very being of God is in self-sacrifice, if I may be allowed to use the word *self* in order to express my meaning. And if we remove from the notion of sacrifice its earthly concomitant of pain, and replace it by perfect joy, by that ecstacy of pleasure which in rare moments a few in this world have felt when they have given *all* to bestow blessing and life upon another,—that thrill of full and perfect being which made them feel, “This is life indeed!”—then we have some notion of that divine life which is God's at every instant of his being.

Man could not see this: he dimly felt it, but it needed to be made clear. So God sent his Son to reveal it in our nature. Christ came clothed in our mortal nature, and through it lived the sacrificing life of God. But, owing to the human nature, the self-giving was necessarily accomplished, not with perfect joy as God accomplishes it, but with a mixture of keen pain. It was then that we saw Love conquering pain; all the misery of rejected affection, the scorn and hatred of men heaped upon one sacred heart, and yet the sufferer loving those who hated him, losing thought of all the ill done to him in pity for those who did it, dying for the sake of his enemies. And, seeing this, the world beheld the Divine Life, understood it, and recognized its beauty. It won the love of men. “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men

unto me." It won the love of God. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." This is the attractive power of the Cross. It first attracts Love to itself, and then, by deepening Love, changes the heart.

Many explanations have been given of the way in which the sacrifice of Christ acts on men as a redeeming power,—mystical interpretations, logical schemes, things which require theologians to explain them. We will be content to find an explanation in that which lies around us, in the doings of our common life, falling back on the plain principle that the laws of Christ's life were the laws of human nature. If we look for it, we shall find the law of redemption now and always at work. New in proclamation, it was not new in action. No man, no nation, has ever been rescued from degradation, except by the same kind of work as that by which God rescues the world.

Take one example out of common life. A widowed mother had an only son. All her love, all that regret for the dead which transmutes itself into love of the living, centred in him. Her life had but one thought, and that made itself into service of him. Every day was a long self-devotion to win means for his education and enjoyment. But far away in the great city he wastes her substance in riotous living. Health makes him thoughtless, youth makes him cruel, and she is left alone. Only returning when his purse or his health is exhausted, she forgives him again and again, and again and again he abandons her. At last, she dies, and dies for him, still hoping, still believing in him, and leaving to him her blessing and her love. Her long self-sacrifice of life is over.



And he returns to the country village, and in the quiet evening stands beside her grave. All his neglect falls upon his heart, all her long patience and unbroken tenderness. A spring of love gushes in his soul, and with it hatred of his sin, self-loathing, temptation to despair. But he remembers that she forgave, he feels himself still loved, and in a softening rush of penitence he resolves that she shall be still alive to him. "I will be worthy of her yet: with broken and contrite heart, I will requite her love by being all she wished me once to be. We may meet again, and I will fall at her feet and tell her all my sorrow, and show her my repentance." A mighty love takes him out of self, and makes the past hateful. He thinks no more of his own pleasure, but of what would have been her pleasure. That hour has redeemed him. He enters on a new life.

But, observe, it is not primarily redemption from punishment. The punishment remains: the pain at his heart is keen, so keen that one might almost say the punishment has only now begun. But it is remedial suffering. It keeps her who sacrificed all for him constantly before his eyes; it stings him into new efforts to be worthy of her; it urges him to do for others that which she did for him. In this way, the punishment slowly alters itself into a means of ennoblement,—a thing which works the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thus, and thus only, is he redeemed from punishment. But he *is* redeemed from self, from hardness of heart, from baseness of character, from inability to feel punishment, from the sins of the past, from the tendency to yield at once to temptation.

Is that true or not? Are there not a million varied

instances of the same kind occurring in the world around us?—friend who so saves friend; wife who so saves her husband; minister who so saves his people; men who so save a nation. Is not that simple, human, natural, easy to be believed in, appealing directly to our reason and our affections, worthy of our reverence, irresistibly attractive? Then turn and believe in the redemptive power of Christ's Atonement, for that is its power. What the woman did for her son Christ did for all mankind. What influence in redeeming her son's life from self, and in re-creating his life through a profound love for an invisible character, she had, though dead, upon him, when his soul was touched into seeing the divineness in her and into believing it as the divine life for him, is identical with the influence of the work of Christ's life and death upon us, when we see them and acknowledge them divine.

Christ's death was the act in which the exhibition of this common law of redemption was concentrated, the central representation in history of the means whereby life is gained and life is given. And to believe on Christ is to look upon his life and death of sacrifice, and to say with a true heart: "I know that this is true life. I accept it as mine. I will fulfil it in thought and action, God being my helper. I see the face of perfect love, and I cannot help adoring; and, as I adore, I feel that love like this, which gives all, is the only way of reaching the perfect joy of perfect being."

Then God is received consciously into the soul. Penitence breaks our heart, and we weep away our sin. Knowing that we are forgiven, we forgive ourselves. We feel in ourselves new possibilities of nobleness, for

has not he loved us? Our life changes into likeness to his life; for in aspiration after it we imitate it, and in contemplating love of it we grow like to that we contemplate. We are regenerated, "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This is the subjective work of the Atonement.

And, since that has been wrought in the world, what effect has it had with regard to our question as to whether the suffering of good men proves God's anger or, as we said, God's love to the race? Those who have so joined themselves to the spirit of Christ's life know that, as long as humanity is humanity, they can only do redemptive work through suffering; for he who opposes evil must bear evil. And, knowing this, for the sake of the work they gladly accept the pain. Nay, more: they know that the self-sacrifice, though it is linked to suffering, is in itself latent joy, for it is the very life of God; and, when men object that it is dreadful that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, the innocent reply: "What is that to you, when we rejoice in it, when we accept it as life eternal, when we thank God that he has counted us worthy to do a portion on earth of his redeeming work, to be indeed a portion of his ceaseless sacrifice? We know now that to die for men is the noblest life; and if we are, as you say, good and true, we are only so in him whose life we follow, and God is right to choose those most like his Son to carry on his Son's work and to be crucified with him. Our suffering does not prove that God is angry with us, but that he loves us so well that he has chosen us out of the world to manifest him to the world. Our suffering proves that

he loves the race; for through that which is of Christ in us he is declaring his character to men, and bringing them to follow the true life and to obtain the true joy."

Again, to pass to another side of the question, it is plain that those who feel thus are reconciled to God. This reconciliation of man to God is another of the ideas of the Atonement. How does it take place? how is it we need reconciliation to God?

We need it, because our first idea of God is a false one. Our fear, united with our ignorance, make out of themselves a God in whom omnipotence is united to human passion,—the God of superstition and fanaticism. We are angry with and fear this false idea. Creating our own God, it is no wonder that we hate him. For of what kind is he? One whose might makes his right; who doeth what he will, but whose will is unlimited by that which we recognize as goodness; one whose love is as arbitrary as his punishment is capricious, who saves this creature and slays another for his own glory and at his own fancy; one who asks for slavish worship; who, when he makes us what is called good, does it without demanding any effort from the soul; who requires to be propitiated by the sacrifice of reason and conscience, and does not tell us why; who annexes damnation to intellectual error, and in whose eyes a pure and noble life is nothing, if he who lives it mistakes doctrine. I need not go through all that has been told us of God by idolatries and priesthoods and sects. God's answer to them all is this: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

How could we help rebelling against that Being, how be reconciled to him? Man must rebel against a God

who reproduces himself when he seeks for power. Bad as man is, he cannot bear, when he thinks truly, to accept as his ruler one who seems to be as capricious as a tyrant, and more dreadful than any earthly tyrant, because his power is supreme.

We are told by some, when we refuse to love this God, that the explanation is that the natural man is enmity to God. There is a sense in which the natural man is enmity to God; but in rejecting a God of this character it is not the natural, but the spiritual man which acts. It is in asserting this false God, a God created by the natural man, that the natural man is enmity to the true God. To create an immoral God, and to give him an immoral worship of fear and ignorance, is to be an enemy of God.

In all our best moments, we are incapable of being reconciled to this Being. We can never be at one with God, atoned to him, never be reconciled to him, till we gain the knowledge of God as he truly is. It was part of the Atonement, that part which united us to God, that Christ revealed God in his life as he was and is for evermore. "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father."

He revealed a Father, and therefore an Educator, who will bring his children to himself. He revealed a God of compassion and love, whose life was in giving away himself for all his creatures. He revealed One whose will was determined by right, and in whom justice and love and purity were the same in kind as they are in us, only perfect and infinite: One who asked to be loved, not feared; to be trusted in, not propitiated by our unmeaning sacrifices. The sacrifices he asked for were such as he showed us in his Son: the sacrifice of our own pleas-

ure and will when they were opposed to eternal right, when they did injury to our fellow-men; the sacrifice of life for the sake of truth and love; not the sacrifice to him of his own gifts whereby he makes himself known,—the gifts of reason and conscience and human love. Nay, it is to these that he appeals. “Why of your own selves judge ye not what is right?” said his Son. “If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” said his apostle. The God whom Christ revealed chose special men out of the world, not that they alone should be saved, but that they might be messengers to do his saving work on all; and he chose them not capriciously, but because they were more loving and true than the rest, and therefore better fitted for his work. The God whom Christ revealed was revealed as one who punished guilt, who would not spare retribution, but the punishment was to be remedial, and the retribution to be used as a means of salvation; as one who did not replace our effort by irresistible and imperial grace, but whose grace enabled us to work out, as under a free government, our own salvation, and demanded the effort of the soul, that we might become each a distinct person with a distinct character. And, because allowing of this individuality and encouraging it, it follows that the obedience he asked was not a blind but a reasonable one, and that, if the life was like his Son’s, intellectual error was not subject to damnation.

I need not dwell on all the points; but, when this revelation was made, man was freed from fear and hatred of God, man could become at one with God, man was reconciled to God. And the gospel truth is this: that, once a man really sees and believes in God in Christ, he

cannot rebel, he cannot hate, he cannot fear, he cannot be unreconciled to him.

There is nothing left to hate or fear. Hate one whom we believe to be our Father in all the profound meaning of the word! Fear one who gives his very life for us! It is impossible. Once we believe it, we are saved,—saved, first, from our own ignorant and ghastly idea of God, which sets all our life wrong; saved, secondly, from our sin, because the true idea of God creates infallibly a life in accordance with it.

And now, in conclusion, and taking the principles we have just expounded as our key, has the idea which men have of God's anger no truth beneath its error?

Yes, this truth: that as long as a man does not know God in Christ, does not understand that God is love, and love him as a father, he will think that punishment is anger, and this belief will make him angry with God. For love, exhibited in the process of his education, must often take the form of chastisement, and seem wrath to him because he does not comprehend its tenderness.

Suppose a man with a sore disease, and at the same time mad. The surgeon approaches with his knife to amputate the diseased limb, and cuts deep and relentlessly. The sufferer sees no reason for the infliction of the pain, does not believe in the surgeon's kindness, whose whole work seems to him mere capricious cruelty. It is so with the sinner who does not know God as a loving Father. His work to him is often anger.

But grant that he gains his reason, becomes conscious of his disease, desires to be free from it, and knows the surgeon's heart: his flesh quivers, his pain is bitter, but he understands the meaning of the suffering, and, though not one deep incision is spared, he claims the surgeon as

his friend, he recognizes his work as the work of love, and, if some madman were to say, "See how cruel; see how the man who said he wished your good is working you evil," the sufferer would smile the smile of trust and pity. "You mistake," he would reply: "I trust my friend's tenderness. I know his heart: it is I who pity you, if you cannot see his love." It is so with the man who believes in the love of God his Father.

So it was with David. No help for me in God! God angry with me! God forsaking me! No, he breaks out: "The Lord is my shield, my glory, and the uplifter of my head." I know I am being punished for my sin, I know I have done wrong to God and man; but I am not so lost as to imagine that punishment means that I have no help in God, and not that it means that he is with me, yes, more closely than in the days of my prosperity. Deserted by God! No! "I cried unto God with my voice, and he heard from his holy hill."

This is entirely splendid. This is faith overcoming the world. This is the trust which brings all the powers of the unseen to a man's side. This is the spirit which gives elasticity to life, and makes triumph out of misfortune. This is the spirit which transmutes punishment into strength, and sin into goodness. This is the spirit which, by believing in the eternal love of God and disbelieving in his anger, realizes God as a Father and himself as a son, bound together by immortal bonds, which are knit closer by trial as well as by joy. This is the belief which makes a life and a character as noble as that of this old Hebrew king, who in these early times anticipated in experience the profoundest Christian feeling, and knew by heart the God of the Christians before their Christ had come.



## DEVOTION TO THE CONVENTIONAL.

1868.

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”—ACTS vii., 51–53.

THE rejection of Christ by the Jewish people was a national sin: it was the act of the whole nation. His death was the result of the full development of the then Jewish mode of looking at the world: the spirit of the age, among the Jews, killed him.

I put it in that way because the term, a national sin, wants a clear definition. It is used at present in a way which is quite reckless of any settled meaning. Every party, even every sect in the country, declares its opponents guilty of a national sin. But a national sin is not an evil done by any one party to the nation, but an evil done by the nation itself, a direct evil consciously chosen and adhered to; or an evil neglect or blindness which takes its rise from the whole tone and spirit of the mass of the people. I might mention courses of political

action in which England has persisted for years, through all changes of party, which are of the character of national sins; but I will content myself with an illustration which will not stir up anger. Apart from political acts or political opinions, on which the generality of the people act, the national sin of the England of to-day is extravagance, waste of money. From the administration of the army and navy down to the administration of the household of the poorest dock laborer, there is, generally speaking, no conscientious, educated, cultured expenditure or care of money. The poor are even more extravagant, more reckless, than the rich. And the dreadful punishment which follows on the sin of waste of money is this, that the nation becomes blind to the true uses of money. It spends nearly fifteen million a year on its army and a little more than one million on education, so intense an absurdity that it only seems necessary to mention it to expose it. It spends ten million a year upon its navy, and is so stingy toward the science which develops the intellect of the whole people, and toward the art which exalts and refines the soul, as only to vote about one hundred thousand a year for these objects; so that things the value of which cannot be represented in money, and on which great sums have been spent, are perishing for want of a little wise expenditure. We are extravagant where we ought to be economical, and economical where we ought to expend freely. This is our punishment; and future Englishmen will look back with amazement upon this time, when we spent millions on war-ships the guns of which cannot be served in a fresh breeze, and left, to take one example, for want of a few thousands, the noblest specimens of

Assyrian art to rot rapidly away in a damp cellar in the British Museum. Not many months have passed since the great representation of a lion-hunt, carved thousands of years ago by an artist who puts our animal sculpture to shame, and who worked from personal observation of the lion in his vigorous contest and in his agony, has been placed in that deadly vault. Now, so rapid has been the destruction that in certain parts there is scarcely a vestige left of the labor of the noble hand, and a white fluff of damp, gathering upon the stone, has eaten away all the delicate lines and subtle carving over a great part of the work. In a few years or so, in spite of the glazing, the whole may be corrupt dust. I have mentioned this partly in the hope that it will be taken up by some one who has some interest left in these subjects, and some influence to use upon them, and partly to show how a national sin, like extravagance, avenges itself by stinginess in matters where stinginess is destruction and disgrace.

But one of the worst of national sins is the rejection or the neglect by the mass of the people of the great men whom God has sent to save the nation, to teach the nation, or to give ideas to the nation. It is a proof of the perfect culture of a people, of its being truly civilized, in intellect and spirit as well as in prosperity, when it recognizes, as it were intuitively, its great men, puts them forward at once as rulers, and obeys their guidance. It is a proof of its failing power, of its retrogression, of its diseased condition, when it neglects, despises, or kills its great men. Of this proposition, for the two are one, history supplies a thousand instances. For the man of noble genius, the prophet or whatever else you call him,

is the test of the nation. He exists not only to do his own active work, but to passively prove what is true gold or false; and as many as he saves he dooms. Those are lost who reject him,—the whole nation is lost if the whole nation rejects him,—for it is not he so much whom it rejects as the saving ideas of which he is the vehicle.

Hence, when such a man appears, the question on which hangs the fate of the people is this: Will the nation recognize him or not? will it envy and destroy him, or believe in him and follow him?

That question, which has again and again been placed before the nations of the world, was placed in the most complete manner before the Jews at the appearance of Christ, the perfect Man,—is placed in him before each of us as individual men,—since he was not only the representation of that which was noblest in the Jewish nation, but of that which is noblest in humanity. Christ was the test of the Jewish nation, and his rejection by them proved that they were lost as a nation. Christ is the test of each of us, and our acceptance or rejection of him proves that we are worthy or unworthy of our humanity. This passive, unconscious work of Christ was recognized by the wisdom of the old man Simeon when he said, "This child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel." It was recognized by Christ himself in many of his parables, notably when he said, "For judgment," *i.e.*, for division, for sifting of the chaff from the wheat, "am I come into the world."

And so it was, wherever he went he was the touchstone of men. Those who were pure, single-eyed, and true-hearted saw him, clung to him, and loved him:

those who were conscious of their need and sin, weary of long searching after rest, and not finding, weary of conventionalities and hypocrisies, believed in him, drank deep of his Spirit, and found redemption and repose. They flew to him as naturally as steel to the magnet. Those who were base of heart or false of heart, proud of their sin, or hardened in their prosperous hypocrisy, men who worshipped the mummy of a past religion, naturally hated him, recoiled from him, and, to get rid of him, hanged him on a tree.

In doing so,—and this was the deed of the mass of the people,—they destroyed their nationality which was hidden in their reception of Christ. It is at least a curious coincidence with this view that, when the priesthood before Pilate openly rejected Christ as king, they did it in these words,—words which repudiated their distinct existence as a nation,—“We have no king but Cæsar.”

He did nothing overt to produce this. He simply lived his life, and it acted on the Jewish world as an electric current upon water: it separated its elements.

It will not be without interest to dwell upon some of the reasons which caused this rejection of Christ among the Jews, and to show how the reasons of the rejection or acceptance of Christ are not primarily to be found in certain spiritual states or feelings which belong to a transcendental region into which men of the world cannot or do not care to enter, but in elements of action and thought which any man may recognize at work in the world around him, and in his own heart; in reasons which are identical with those which cause a nation to

reverence or neglect its really great men, to lead a noble or an ignoble life.

The first of these is *devotion to the conventional*.

It is practically identical with want of individuality, one of the most painful deficiencies in our present society.

Now, the rectification of that evil lies at the root of Christianity. Christ came to proclaim and to insure the distinct life, the originality, of each man. All the principles he laid down, all the teaching of his followers as recorded in the Epistles, tend to produce individuality, rescue men from being mingled up, indistinguishable atoms, with the mass of men, teach them that they possess a distinct character, which it is God's will to educate; distinct gifts which God the Spirit will inspire and develop; a peculiar work for which each man is elected, and in performing which his personality will become more and more defined.

Now, the spirit of the world, when it is conventional,—and when is it not?—is in exact opposition to this. Its tendency is to reduce all men and women to one pattern, to level the landscape of humanity to a dead plain, to clip all the trees which are growing freely, “of their own divine vitality,” into pollards, to wear all individuality down into uniformity. There must be nothing original,—in the world's language, eccentric, erratic; men must desire nothing strongly, think nothing which the generality do not think, have no strongly outlined character. The influence of society must be collective, it must reject as a portion of it the influence of any marked individuality. Custom is to be lord and king,—nay, despot. We must all dress in the same way, read

the same books, talk of the same things; and, when we change, change altogether, like Wordsworth's cloud, "which moveth altogether, if it move at all." We do not object to progress, but we do object to eccentricity. Society must not be affronted by originality. It is a rudeness. It suggests that society might be better, that there may be an imperfection here or there. Level everybody, and then let us all collectively advance; but no one must leave the ranks or step to the front.

This is the spirit which either cannot see, or, seeing, hates men of genius. They are in conflict with the known and accredited modes of action. They do not paint pictures in the manner of the ancients, nor judge political events in accordance with public opinion, nor write poems which the customary intellect can understand, nor lead a political party according to precedent. They are said to shock the world. As if that was not the very best thing which could happen to the world! So it comes to pass that they are depreciated and neglected, or, if they are too great and persist, persecuted and killed. And, indeed, it is not difficult to get rid of them; for you have only to increase the weight of the spirit of custom and bring it to bear upon them, and that will settle the question, for men of genius cannot breathe in this atmosphere, it kills them: the air must be natural in which they live, and the society must be free. The pitiable thing in English society now is, not only the difficulty of an original man existing in it, but that society is in danger of becoming of so dreadful a uniformity that no original man can be developed in it at all. This, if anything, will become the ruin of England's greatness.

There is, it is true, a kind of reaction going on at present against this tyranny of society. Young men and women, weary of monotonous pleasures, are in rebellion; but the whole social condition has been so degraded that they rush into still more artificial and unnatural pleasures and excitements. In endeavoring to become free, they enslave themselves the more.

Those who might do much do little. It is one of the advantages of wealth and high position that those who possess them may initiate the uncustomary without a cry being raised against them. But, even with every opportunity, how little imagination do they ever display, how little invention, how little they do to relieve the melancholy uniformity of our pleasures, or the intense joylessness of our work!

Now, this was precisely the spirit of the Jewish religious world at the time of Christ. Men were bound down to a multitude of fixed rules and maxims, they were hedged in on all sides. It was all arranged how they were to live and die, to repent and make atonement, to fast and pray, to believe and to worship, to dress and move. It was the most finished conventionalism of religion, in spite of the different sects, which the world has ever seen.

Then came Christ, entirely original, proclaiming new ideas, or, at least, old truths in a new form, making thoughts universal which had been particular, overthrowing worn-out ceremonies, satirizing and denouncing things gray with the dust of ages, letting in the light of truth into the chambers where the priests and lawyers spun their webs of theology to ensnare the free souls of men, trampling down relentlessly the darling customs of



the old conservatism, shocking and bewildering the religious society. And they were dismayed and horrified.

He did not keep, they said, the Sabbath day. He ate and drank — abominable iniquity! — with publicans and sinners. He allowed a fallen woman to touch him. Worse still, he did not wash his hands before he ate bread. He did not teach as the scribes did. He did not live the time-honored and ascetic life of a prophet. He dared to speak against the priesthood and the aristocracy. He associated with fishermen. He came from Nazareth. That was enough: no good could come from Nazareth. He was a carpenter's son, and illiterate; and no prophet was made, or could be made, out of such materials. And this man! he dares to disturb us, to contest our maxims, to set at naught our customs, to array himself against our despotism. "Come, let us kill him." And so they crucified him. The conventional spirit of society in Jerusalem, that was one of the murderers of Christ. They did not see, the wretched men, that in murdering him they murdered their nation also.

So far for this conventional spirit as that which hinders the development or obstructs the work of genius, and as that which, in strict analogy with its work to-day, killed the Prince of Life long ago in Jerusalem. Let me take the question now out of the realm of thought and history, and apply it practically.

Ask yourselves two questions: First, what would be the fate of Christ if he were suddenly to appear as a teacher in the middle of London, as he did of old in the middle of Jerusalem? How would our orthodox religious society and our conventional social world receive him? Desiring to speak with all reverence, he would

horrify the one by his heterodox opinions, as they would be called; the other by his absolute carelessness and scorn of many of the very palladia of society. Supposing he were to denounce—as he would in no measured terms—our system of caste; attack, as he did of old in Judea, our most cherished maxims about property and rights; live in opposition to certain social rules, receiving sinners and dining with outcasts; tear away the flimsy veil of words whereby we excuse our extravagance, our vanity, our pushing for position; contemn with scorn our accredited hypocrisies, which we think allowable, because they make the surface of society smooth; live among us his free, bold, unconventional, outspoken life,—how should we receive him? It is a question which it is worth while that society should ask itself.

I trust more would hail his advent than we think. I believe the time is come when men are sick of falsehood, sick of the tyranny of custom, sick of living in unreality; that they are longing for escape, longing for a new life and a new order of things, longing for some fresh ideas to come and stir, like the angel, the stagnant pool. What is the meaning of the vague hopes everywhere expressed about the new Parliament? It really means that England is anxious for a more ideal, a more true and serious life, a reformed society.

Again, to connect this first question with the religious world: suppose Christ were to come now and proclaim in Scotland that the Sabbath was made for man, or to preach the Sermon on the Mount as the full revelation of God to men accustomed to hear the gospel scheme discussed each Sunday. In the first case he would be

persecuted as an infidel, and in the second as a heretic. Supposing he were now to speak against sacerdotal pretension or the worship of the letter of the Bible, against a religion which sought to gain life from minute observances, or against a Sadducean denial of all that is spiritual (a tendency of the religious liberals of to-day), as strongly and as sharply as he spoke at Jerusalem,—how would he escape? The religious world could not crucify him, but they would open on him the tongue of persecution.

I believe there are thousands who would join themselves to him, thousands more than recognized him in Judea,—for the world has advanced indeed since then,—thousands of true men from among all religious bodies, and thousands from among those who are now plentifully sprinkled with the epithets of rationalists, infidels, heretics, and atheists; but there are thousands who call themselves by his name who would turn from him in dismay or in dislike, who would neglect or persecute him, for he would come among our old conservatisms of religion, among our doctrinal systems and close creeds, superstitions, false liberalism, priesthoods, and ritualisms, as he came of old among them all in Jerusalem, like lightning, to consume and wither everything false, retrograde, conventional, restricted, uncharitable, and superstitious; to kindle into life all that is living, loving, akin to light, and full of truth within our religious world. If we *could* accept the revolution he would make, our national religion would be saved: if not, it would be enervated by the blow, and die.

Brethren, we ought, realizing these things as members of society or members of any religious body,—realizing,

I say, Christ speaking to us as he would speak now,—to feel our falseness, and, in the horror of it, to act like men who have discovered a traitor in their camp, whom they must destroy or themselves perish. We may save our nation if we resolve, each one here for himself, to free ourselves from cant and formalism and superstition, to step into the clear air of freedom, individuality, and truth, to live in crystal uprightness of life and holiness of heart.

And, lastly, ask yourselves this second question, how far the spirit of the world, as devotion to conventionality, to accredited opinion, is preventing you personally from receiving Christ.

Is your sole aim the endeavor to please your party, running after it into that which you feel as evil, as well as that which you feel as good; forfeiting your Christian individuality as a son of God, that you may follow in the wake of the public opinion of your party? Is that your view of manly duty? Then you cannot receive Christ, for he demands that you should be true to your own soul.

Are you permitting yourself to chime in with the low morality of the day, to accept the common standard held by the generality, repudiating, as if it were a kind of Christian charity to do so, the desire to be better than your neighbors, and so coming at last to join in the light laugh with which the world treats social immoralities, reckless extravagance, the dishonesty of trade or the dishonesty of the exchange, or the more flagrant shame, dishonesty, and folly which adorn the turf,—letting evils take their course because society does not protest as yet, till gradually the evils appear to you at first en-

durable, and then even beautiful, being protected by the deities of Custom and Fashion, which we enthrone instead of God? Are you drifting into such a state of heart? If so, you cannot expect to be able to receive Christ, for he demands that life should be ideal: not only moral, but godlike; not the prudence of silence about evil, but the imprudence of bold separation from evil.

And, leaving much behind, to come home to the inner spiritual life, is your religion only the creature of custom, not of conviction, only conventional, not individual? Have you received and adopted current opinions because they are current, without inquiry, without interest, without any effort of the soul,—orthodox because it is the fashion to be orthodox, or heterodox because it is the fashion to be heterodox? How can you receive Christ,—for where he comes he claims reality, the living energy of interest, the passion of the soul for light and progress? Ye must be born again, born out of a dead, Pharisaic, conventional form of religion into a living individual union with the life of God. Some may tell you not to inquire, lest you should doubt; not to think, but to accept blindly the doctrines of the Church, lest you should end in scepticism. Counsels of cowardice and faithlessness, productive of that false sleep of the soul which is ten times worse than scepticism, which takes from man the activity of thinking, of doubting, of concluding, which destroys the boundless joy of religious personality, the pleasure of consciously willing, of full conviction, to be a follower of Christ, a man at one with God. Our faith, when it is accepted only on the word of others, is untried and weak. It has the strength

of a castle which has never been attacked, of a chain which never has been proved. It may resist the trial, but we are not sure about it. We are afraid of search, afraid of new opinions, afraid of thought, lest possibly we lose our form of faith. Every infidel objection makes us tremble, every new discovery in science is a terror. Take away the old form, and we are lost: we cry out that God is dead and Christ is overthrown.

In reality, we have no faith, no religion, no God. We have only a superstition, a set of opinions, and, instead of a living God, a fetish.

The true religious life comes of a clear realization of our distinct personal relation to God. The views of society, the accredited opinions of the Church on religion, the true man does not despise: he seeks to understand them, for perhaps they may assist him in his endeavors; but he does not follow them blindly: he puts them even aside altogether, that he may go straight to God, and find God for himself, and as a *person* know that God is his, and that he is God's. His faith is secure, because he has won it by conquest of objections, because he has reached it through the overthrow of doubt, because he has proved it in trial and found it strong. He has come at truth by personal thought, reflection, by personal struggle against falsehood, through the passion and effort of his soul. His love of Christ is not a mere religious phrase: it is a reality. He has applied the principles of the Redeemer's life and words to his own life, to the movements of the world, as tests and direction in the hours of trial, when duties clash or when decision is demanded; and he has found them answer to the call. He has studied the Saviour's character and

meditated on his life; and of conviction he has chosen him as the highest object of his worship, as the ideal to which he aspires.

Prayer is no form of words to him: he has known and proved its power to bring his soul into blest communion with the Highest. He does not hesitate to speak the truth, for he feels that he is inspired of God.

Such a man's religion is not conventional, has no fear, is not superstitious: it is individual, it is *his*, inwoven with his life, part of his being; nay, it is his being. He is consciously at one with God. He has freely, with all the faculties of his humanity, received Christ Jesus.

Two things, then, are laid before you this day: conventional religion, a whited sepulchre; personal religion, a fair temple whose sure foundations are bound together by the twisted strength of the innermost fibres of the soul,—a religion of words accepted from others, which begins in self-deception and ends in blindness, superstition, and the terror of the soul, or a religion at one with life, begun in resolution, continued in personal action toward Christ, the Ideal of the soul, and ending in the conscious rest of union with God.

Choose; and may God grant us all grace to choose that which makes us men, not the puppets of opinion,—that life which frees us from the slavery of following the multitude, and makes us sons of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## THE RELIGION OF SIGNS.

1868.

“And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet.” — LUKE xi., 29.

FROM the ancient days of the people of Israel, when Moses, knowing the character of his nation, asked of God that he would vouchsafe to him a sensible sign to show as proof of his mission, until the time of Christ, we find among the Jews the craving for signs and wonders.

They desired material proofs for spiritual things, they demanded that every revelation should be accredited by miracles. It was through the gate of the senses and under the guidance of wonder, not through the gate of the spirit and under the guidance of faith, that they entered the temple of Religion.

Now, this was absolutely a childish position. The child is the scholar of the senses, but it is a disgrace to a man to be their slave. The child may believe that the moon is self-luminous,—it is through believing the error that he finds out its erroneousness,—but it is ridiculous in the grown-up man who has examined the question not to say, “My senses are wrong.”

It is spiritual childishness which believes that a doc-



trine or a man's life are true because of a miracle. The miracle speaks for the most part to the senses, and the senses can tell us nothing of the spiritual world.

It is spiritual manhood which out of a heart educated by the experience arising from the slow rejection of error can say of any spiritual truth, "It *is* so, it *must* be so. I have the witness of it within; and, though a thousand miracles were to suggest the denial of it, I should cling to it unswervingly."

Now, the position of mind exactly opposite to this was that held by a large number of the common Jews, and apparently by the greater part of the chief men. The latter demanded signs of Christ as proof of the truth of his teaching: the former displayed an absolutely sensual craving for miracles. And yet on neither of these classes did the miracles, *per se*, produce any lasting effect. The Pharisees confessed, we are told, the reality of the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, and then immediately met to take measures to put Christ to death. The common people were so little impressed with one miracle that they immediately demanded another, as if the first had had no meaning.

This is the plain spirit of Fetishism, or the worship of sensible wonders without any knowledge why the worship is given, without any attempt to discover why the wonder has occurred.

It was the temptation to yield to this passion of his time and to employ his miraculous power for the sake of winning the favor of the multitude, or for ostentation, or for the sake of establishing his kingdom rapidly, which Christ conquered in the trial called that of the pinnacle of the temple. In that temptation was gathered up the

whole meaning of this part of the spirit of the age; and, in conquering it at the outset of his career, he conquered it for his whole life. Again and again it met him, but it met him in vain. Even at the last, the voice of this phase of the spirit of the world mocked him upon the cross. "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." They fancied, even then, that an outward sign could secure their faith: as if those men *could* believe, who were blind to the wonder of love, obedience, and martyrdom for truth, which, greater than any miracle, was exhibited before their eyes on Calvary.

His greatest utterances, where all was great, were spoken in the spirit contrary to this religion of the senses. He threw men back upon the witness of their own heart,—“They that are of the truth hear my voice.” He declared that his true followers know him by intuition,—“My sheep know my voice, and they follow me.” He made eternal life consist, not in the blind faith which came and went with the increase and cessation of miracle, but in the faith which recognized him as the Son of God; in the spiritual union which he expressed in the words, “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him.” God, in his view, was not the wonder-worker of the Old Testament, but a Spirit who demanded a spiritual worship arising out of a deep conviction of his necessity to the soul. “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” He swept away with fiery and pregnant words all the jugglery of superstitious ceremonial with which men had overloaded the simple idea of God; and he called them back to

natural life and feeling, to childlike trust in a Father ever near to them, to a simple and pure morality. But, at the same time, he presented to their effort a grand ideal, which, though it seemed too high for human nature, has yet stirred and exalted men as no other ideal has ever done,—“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven was perfect.”

It was all too high, too simple, too spiritual, to please the Jewish taste. It is true he condescended in a certain degree to their weakness of faith; and he did many mighty works, partly because he felt that some men must be first attracted through the senses, and partly, as in the case of Nathanael, in order to confirm a wavering faith. But, on the other hand, he always refused to do any miracle without an adequate motive. Where the miracle could establish no principle, where it was not preceded by faith, or where it did not teach a universal lesson, Christ would not pander to the Jewish craving for a sign. This was his stern answer, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. There shall *no* sign be given it,” etc.

Stung with his righteous scorn of their passion for the visible, they slew him, and signed in his death the warrant of their nation's ruin.

Now, I have been endeavoring to show that the spirit of the world in its several developments, which killed Christ, is identical with the spirit which in every nation has neglected, enfeebled, and persecuted all individuality, originality, or genius, not only in religion, but in philosophy, poetry, art, and science. We have seen this in the case of the worship of the conventional and of the worship of gain, ostentation, and comfort. We have

seen how these phases of the spirit of the world have corrupted, ruined, and killed the life of men who rose above the common standard. I do not say that this result is due altogether to the spirit of the world: much is due to the weakness of the men themselves; but we who are not gifted men have no idea of the subtlety and awful force of the temptations of the world to men of genius; we, who have not the strength nor the weakness of genius, can scarcely conceive how cruel and how debasing the influence of the world may be, when it masters that strength or flatters that weakness into folly.

The phase of the spirit of the world of which we speak to-day is that of devotion to signs and wonders.

Men of genius are themselves signs and wonders in the world. How does the world treat them? It does not help them, it does not bring out what is best in them: it makes a show of them, and then dismisses them with a sigh of weariness. They are taken up and flattered till all their strength is drained away. They are polished down till all the angles which made them of use, which jarred upon the splendid dulness or irritated into some life the lazy indifference of common society, are smoothed away; and the man offends no more by originality. It fills one with pity and anger to think how many, who might have been Samsons and have smitten our modern Philistinism to its death, have been ensnared by the Delilah of fashionable society, and set, "shorn of their puissant locks," to work in the prison and to make sport for the Philistines. We mourn, and with just cause, the loss of many who, born to be kings, have sunk into willing slaves.

Look at the way in which this devotion to signs and wonders in the world acts now upon the literature of the country. In that sphere, it is represented by a craving for "sensationalism," which results in intellectual sloth. Men ask for books which excite, but give no trouble. They have not time, they say, to read slowly, much less to read a book twice over. A book genuinely thought out, but not brilliant, in which the experience of a life of intellectual work is concentrated, has scarcely a chance of success. The public are too indolent to read even a thoughtful review of such a book, unless it be written in sparkling style and flavored with a spice of sensation. Except they read signs and wonders, they will not read at all. What are the consequences? Men of thought, who are strong of will and believe in themselves, refuse to submit to this tyrannical cry for signs. They persist in writing books of worth and weight; but they do it in a kind of despair, and their work suffers from the dogged dulness which despair creates. Unlistened to and hopeless, they cannot write with the joy which enlivens expression, with the uplifting sense of a public sympathy.

Men of thought, who are weak of will, and whose self-confidence depends upon the public voice, write one book of power, and then surrender their high mission. They enter on the career which demoralizes the finer powers of genius,—the career of the reviewer and the magazine contributor,—and too often end by drifting into the mere sensationalist, writing a book which, like an annual, grows, blooms, and dies in a season. They strain after brilliancy,—not brilliancy for its own sake, but brilliancy for the sake of show or favor. They fall

into the very temptation which Christ resisted in the case of miracles.

I might illustrate the subject in other spheres than the sphere of literature; but enough has been said to show the operation upon men of genius of this element of the spirit of the world, which as a craving for signs and wonders among the Jews hurried the Saviour to the cross.

Now, a society tainted with the diseased passion for this class of writing is drifting away from that temper of mind which can frankly accept Christ Jesus; for his is not the life which can satisfy the sensationalist.

Separate it from the moral glory, the spiritual beauty, which rose from it like a sea of light out of inner fountains, and it is a common life enough. Uneventful for thirty years, the story of it, even in the midst of its miracles, is marked by nothing especially exciting. It was in itself eminently natural, unartificial, deep, cool, and quiet as a garden well, passed by preference among rustic, uneducated men, amid the holy serenity of the mountain and the desert, among the gracious simplicities of natural beauty, beside the ripple of the lake, upon the grass-grown hill,—seeking even at Jerusalem refuge from the noise and passion of the city in the peaceful village of Bethany or among the shadows of the silent Garden of Gethsemane.

We cannot understand it, we cannot understand him, we cannot enter into the profound simplicity and truth of his teaching, if we have habituated our mind to morbid excitement, our moral sense to a continual violation of it in both French and English novels, and our emotions to a mental hysteria which destroys the will.

This may seem a slight evil; but it is more than we imagine. We should look with fear upon the growth of this temper in English society: it is denaturalizing it. It renders both mind and heart corrupt. It will end by making the life corrupt and society impure. Sensationalism in literature is closely connected with sensuality in society.

Again, take in the present time, as another form of the Jewish passion for signs and wonders, the existence among us of men and women with a passion for the false supernatural. The true supernatural is not the miraculous, but the purely spiritual; not the manifestation of things which astonish the senses, but the revelation of things which ennoble the spirit. In neither of these ways are the things with which we have been lately favored truly supernatural. They are abundantly material, and they do not ennoble. The last appearance of the chief prophet has not been characterized by a surplus of spirituality.

Every day, however, fewer persons are likely to be swept away by this spiritual quackery; for, as the ozone of scientific knowledge is added to our social atmosphere, these corrupt growths dwindle and die. But it is worth while perhaps to say that they enfeeble the intellect and do harm to Christianity. No man can long float in the misty region of pale speculation in which these exhibitions involve him,—speculation which starts from no fixed point and aims at nothing,—nor be tossed about by the inconsequence of the so-called phenomena, without feeling his intellect ebbing away and its manliness departing. They render the reason a useless part of our being.

So doing, they do evil to Christianity; for to conceive Christianity grandly, to expound it nobly, to develop it within our own souls as fully as possible, and to work for its perfect kingdom, we need to unite to its spiritual power within us "the power of a free, vigorous, manly, and well-cultured intellect." We need for the work of Christ, not only spiritual life as the first thing, but intellectual light as the second.

Again, one of the greatest evils which arise from the encouragement of charlatanry of this kind in connection with religion — and it is so connected — is that it protracts the period when the work of science and religion, by consent of their several professors, will advance together. It causes scientific men to think that everything connected with religion is inimical to the methods of science: it intensifies their opposition to the thought of the supernatural by setting before them a false supernaturalism. It throws contempt upon and degrades the notion of a spiritual world. It increases a credulity on the one hand which leads to gross superstition, it increases an unbelief on the other which leads to gross materialism. The extremes of the two sides are set into stronger opposition; and, in the noise which the extreme parties make, the voices of wiser men remain unheard.

One element of good hope, however, attends its appearance among us. The spirit in society which it feeds has almost always, in conjunction with a spirit of unbelief with which it is connected, preceded a revolution of thought. It was so before the teaching of Christianity. It was so before the rise of the Reformation. It was so before the outburst of new ideas which gave force to the early days of the French Revolution.



I have hope that this blind confusion, this tossing together of the elements of credulity and unbelief, will create, in a reaction from them, a rational and liberal faith.

Analogous to this is the endeavor to awake and excite religious sensibility either by the overwrought fervor of the revivalist, producing an hysterical excitement which is mistaken for a spiritual manifestation, or by the sensual impressions made by the lights, incense, music, color, and all the paraphernalia of the ritualists. I do not deny the real enthusiasm, however cruelly mistaken in its mode of action, nor the good which many of the revivalists have done; nor the good and the enthusiasm which follow the efforts of the ritualist, but in a certain degree they both agree in this,—they try to produce spirituality from without. They make use of stimulants which are unnatural in relation to the spirit, though natural in their relation to the body.

Precisely the same thing is done by those who hunt after exciting sermons, who imagine they repair the ravages of the devotion of six days to the world by an emotional impression on Sunday as transient as the morning dew; who mistake a thrill of intellectual excitement for a spiritual conviction, a glow of aspiration for a religious act, and pleasure in a sermon for the will to conquer evil.

Now, all these things are, under one form or another, the products of the same spirit which in the days of Christ sought for signs and wonders.

The melancholy superstition which is called so ironically spiritualism unfits its devoted votaries for their daily work. Some play with it, and it does them little

harm; but others, embarking in it with energy, get into an excited, inoperative, unhealthy condition, in which a quiet Christian life becomes all but impossible, in which duty becomes a burden if it separate them from their experiments, in which it seems better to sit at a table slothfully waiting for a spiritual communication than to go with Christ into the middle of the arena of life, and do our duty there against the evil. It is there, in faithful following of him, that we shall have spiritual communications; it is there, in self-sacrificing action, that we shall feel inspired by God to act and speak; it is there that we shall realize our communication with the host of all great spirits, in enduring like them all things for the truth; it is there, by faithful prayer and resistance to temptation, by the warfare against sin within and wrong without, that our hearts will begin to beat with the excitement which ennobles and the enthusiasm which does not decay; it is there, loving our Saviour's spirit above all things and aspiring to reach his divine perfection, that we shall enter into the true spiritual world, and feel, not the miserable presences of beings which, on the impossible supposition of their existence, it is a disgrace to associate with, but the very presence of the Spirit of God within us; hear, not a futile and laborious noise, but the voice of God himself, saying to us, after the conquest of sin or the performance of duty in his strength, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

And as to the attempts of revivalists or ritualists to influence the spirit through the flesh, there is this plain evil: that all stimulants of this character produce each their own peculiar reaction, and are followed in the reaction by exhaustion. Then the passionate emotion

must be worked up again by another and a fiercer address, or the æsthetic impression which produced the thrill must be again received, but this time by means of a more exciting service. It follows, then, that the exhaustion of reaction is greater, since the stimulant has been more violent. So it proceeds, till at last the limit of stimulation has been reached and the excitement can be aroused no more. Only the exhaustion remains, the craving is still there; and the worn-out votaries of the religion of the nerves and the senses turn back, unable to do without their thrilling sensations, to the old excitements, and go back in the case of revivalism to sin, in the case of ritualism to the world.

Of course, we only speak of tendencies, not of persons. It would be absurd to deny that many faithful men have been made by revivalism. It would be far more absurd to deny that there are thousands of devoted men who attach a living meaning to ritualistic observances, and to whom these things are not a form without a spirit, but the natural expression, and therefore to them the right expression, of spiritual feelings, who use them not to create from without, but to embody from within, their inner life with God.

But, making this allowance, it seems clear that this form of religious life is not the highest nor the truest form of the Christian life. It encourages that temper of mind which demands signs and wonders as proofs and supports of faith. It is in bondage to ceremonies: it is against our full freedom in Christ Jesus. It says to men, in principle, "Except ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." It denies the equal holiness of all times, of all places, to the Christian heart, by asserting

the especial holiness of certain times and certain places. It places the priest between us and God as a necessary means, whereby alone we may hold communication with God. It asserts the absolute necessity of certain symbolic observances for the reception of any higher spiritual grace from God.

This is not the purity and simplicity of Christianity. It is a rehabilitation of those elements in Judaism which Christ attacked and overthrew. It is opposed to the whole spirit of his teaching. He removed the barriers of ceremonies, of sacrifices, of authority, of localized and exclusive sanctities; and he brought the heart of each man into direct communion with the Heavenly Father. As to a priesthood, and its pretensions to interfere between us and God, Christ swept it away with every word and action of his life, and by uniting the individual soul to God made every man his own priest, and the daily spiritual offering of each man's love in feeling and in action the acceptable sacrifice. "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him."

There is the charter of our freedom; and there is not a word in it of the necessity of God's grace coming to us filtered through the medium of a priest, or a ceremony, or a sacrament, or a symbol.

Blessed is he, in these times of devotion to the sensible, who can behold the obedience and the deep self-sacrifice of the Saviour's life and death; who can watch, unfolding in him, perfect love, undaunted courage, stainless purity, the simple nobleness of truth, the union of mercy and justice, and, recognizing that as God in

humanity, throw himself upon it in a pure passion of love, and with a solemn force of faith, and clasp the perfect man to his heart as his unique possession, as his living impulse, as his Redeemer, in whose love his sin is drowned, his lower self annihilated.

Signs, wonders, excitements, observances, I need them not to make me trust in thee. I feel thy power in my heart, thy presence moving in my life. I hear thy voice: it is enough, my spirit knows its sound, claims it as the voice of the rightful Master of my being. I have not *seen*; but, O my Saviour! I have *felt*, and I believe.

## THE NATURALNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

1867.

“And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?”—LUKE xiii., 2-4.

LAST year, during the prevalence of the cholera, we spoke of it from this place, and of the lessons which it taught us. We then laid down the principle that all the so-called judgments of God were the natural results of violation of laws, and as such always unarbitrary.

The principle is a common one, but it requires to be stated and restated continually, and especially so from the pulpit. First, because it is explicitly or implicitly denied by a large number of religious persons, to the great detriment, I believe, of religion; and, secondly, because, in establishing it firmly, we get rid of nearly all that sets scientific men in opposition to religious men.

Now, the principle that every judgment of God is connected, in the way of ordinary cause and effect, with the sin or error therein condemned, destroys at once the notion that plague or famine are judgments upon us for

infidelity or rationalism or sabbath-breaking, or our private sins; for there is plainly no natural connection between the alleged sin and the alleged punishment. For example, the town which takes due sanitary precautions may refuse to give one penny to missions, but it will not be visited by a virulent outbreak of cholera. The town which takes no sanitary precautions, but gives £10,000 a year to missions, will, in spite of its Christian generosity, become a victim to the epidemic. The lightning will strike the ship of the good man who chooses to sail without a lightning-conductor, it will spare the ship of the atheist and the blasphemer who provides himself with the protecting-rod. The cattle plague will not touch the cattle of the most active Roman Catholic in England, if his quarantine is exclusive enough; while it will destroy all the cows of the best Protestant in the country, if he be careless of their isolation. We may sin as much as we please in our own persons, but we shall escape cholera as much as we shall escape famine, if we discover the source of contagion and guard against it.

There is, then, always a natural connection between the sin and the punishment; and the punishment points out its own cause. To follow the guiding of its finger is to discover the evil, and, when discovered, to rectify it. But we assume a supernatural cause, and the evil remains hidden from us. There is no hope of success till we act upon the principle which is here laid down.

It is my intention this morning to show the truth of this principle in other spheres than that of epidemic disease. If we can manifest its universality, we go far to prove its truth. Take as the first illustration the case of the Moral Law.

The Ten Commandments appear at first sight to be arbitrary rules of conduct. Why should we not kill a man when he has injured us? Why should we not steal when we are in want? Many a savage community has argued in this way, and we do not want for isolated instances of the same feeling in civilized societies. But, as civilization increased, the commands of the Decalogue were felt to be right, not only because they were echoed by an inward voice, but also because they were proved to be necessary for the progress of humanity. They were commanded, then, not only because of their agreement to eternal right, but also because of their necessity. Some of them were in very early times clearly seen as needful,—the sacredness of an oath, the sacredness of human life, the sacredness of property. On the other hand, it has taken centuries to show that polytheism is a destructive element to national greatness. Others were not so clearly seen to be just. “Thou shalt not covet” seemed to make a great deal out of nothing; but experience taught men, though slowly, that inordinate desire for the goods of another was the most fruitful source of violation of social rights. Again, to reconcile the fourth commandment with a natural feeling of right has been a puzzle to many. But men saw, as the labor of the world increased, the naturalness of a day of rest and its necessity for human nature. It was seen to be commanded, not of caprice on the part of God, but because it was needful for humanity. The commandments have force, therefore, not because they are commanded by a God of power, but because they are either needful for, or natural to, human nature.

Nor is the judgment which follows on their violation



any more arbitrary than the laws themselves. As they have their root in our nature, so they have their punishment in our nature. Violate a moral law, and our constitution protests through our conscience. Sorrow awakes, remorse follows; and remorse is felt in itself to be the mark of separation from God. The punishment is not arbitrary, but natural. Moreover, each particular violation of the moral law has its own proper judgment. The man who is dishonest in one branch of his life soon feels dishonesty — not impurity, not anything else but dishonesty — creep through his whole life and enter into all his actions. Impurity has its own punishment, and that is increasing corruption of heart. Each sin has its own judgment, and not another's; and the judgment is so naturally linked to the sin that it points out unmistakably what the particular sin is which is punished. The moral pain calls attention to the moral disease. It is the voice of God saying: "*There*, in that thing you are wrong, my child. Do not do it again, do the very opposite."

Take, again, the intellectual part of man. The necessities for intellectual progress are attention, perseverance, practice. Refuse to submit to these laws, and you are punished by loss of memory or inactivity of memory, by failure in your work or by inability to think and act quickly at the proper moment. The intellectual punishments follow as naturally upon violation of the laws of the intellect as sickness does on violation of the laws of health, and they point out as clearly their causes as trembling nerves point out their cause in the indulgence of the drunkard.

Again, take what may be called national laws. These

have been, as it were, codified by the Jewish prophets. They were men whose holiness brought them near to God, and gave them insight into the diseases of nations. They saw clearly the natural result of these diseases, and they proclaimed it to the world. They looked on Samaria, and saw there a corrupt aristocracy, failing patriotism, oppression of the poor, falsification of justice, and they said, God will judge this city, and it shall be overthrown by Assyria. Well, was that an arbitrary judgment? It was of God; but given a powerful neighbor, and a divided people in which the real fighting and working class has been crushed, enslaved, and unjustly treated, and an enervated, lazy, pleasure-consumed upper class, and what is the natural result? Why, that very thing which the prophets called God's judgment. God's judgment was the natural result of the violation of the first of national laws,—even-handed justice to all parties in the State. The same principle is true in a thousand instances in history: the national judgments of war, revolution, pestilence, famine, are the direct results of the violation by nations of certain plain laws which have become clear by experience. Unfortunately, men took them to mean a supernatural expression of God's anger, instead of looking for their natural causes. It is this notion of God not being a God of order, but a God who interferes capriciously with the course of society, which has made the advance of the world so slow, and made so many of his judgments useless. For these judgments come to teach nations what is wrong in them; and the judgments must come again and again, while the wrong thing is there. It is slow work teaching blind men; but God does not spare trouble, and the

laws of the universe cannot be bought off by prayer. There is but one way of making them kind, and that is by getting on their side. We find them out by punishment, as a child finds out that he must not touch fire by being burnt. Look at slavery. It was not plainly forbidden, but no nation practised it without paying dearly for it. It devoured, like a slow disease, national prosperity and uprightness. It was not so deadly to the earlier nations as it has been to the Southern States; but then ancient slavery was not so bad as American slavery. Ancient slavery had no vast breeding system. Its oppression was more cruel, but it was not "so degrading, so systematic, and so unrelenting." The slave had hope, had a chance of liberty, could hold some property, could receive some education: none of these things alleviated slavery in America. Wherever it has prevailed in modern times, it has corroded family life, degraded national honor, and reduced flourishing lands to wildernesses. The Southern States would not learn that lesson from history. They were judged and sentenced by God. But their defeat was the natural result of their clinging to slavery. They were destitute of men and of means to fight the North. They had no middle class, no working-men class, they had no manufactories, scarcely any of the natural wealth of their States was worked, vast tracts of once productive land were exhausted. How could the Southerners succeed when all the vast resources of the North, supported by a spiritual idea, were brought to bear upon them? The result could not be doubted for a moment. It was God's judgment, but it was naturally worked out.

The conclusion I draw from this is that all *national judgments of God come about naturally.*

But there are certain judgments mentioned in the Bible which seem to be supernatural,—the destruction of Sodom, of Sennacherib's army, of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, the plagues sent upon the Israelites, and others. These are the difficulty. How shall we explain them? or shall we seek to explain them at all? First, we must remember that the writers had not the knowledge capable of explaining them, that nature to them was an insoluble mystery. They naturally, then, referred these things to a direct action of God, or rather, because they were out of the common, to an interference of God with nature. They were right in referring them to God; but it is possible that, owing to their ignorance of nature, they were wrong in their way of explaining them. If they had seen clearly, they would have seen sufficient reason for them in ordinary causes. We accept their teaching as far as it is connected with the spiritual world: we cannot accept it as far as it is concerned with the physical world, for they knew nothing about it.

Secondly, there is a thought which goes far, if it be true, to explain these things: it is that the course of human history may be so arranged that, at times, healing or destructive natural occurrences coincide with crises in the history of a nation. For example, we might say that the sins of Sodom had reached their height at the very period when the elastic forces which were swelling beneath the plain of the Dead Sea had reached their last possible expansion. Or that the army of Sennacherib lay encamped in the way of the pestilential wind, which would have blown over the spot whether they had been there or not.

Thirdly, whatever difficulty these things present to us in the Bible, the same difficulty occurs in what is profanely called profane history. There is not the slightest doubt that, had the Carthaginians been Jews, the earthquake at Thrasymene would have been represented as a miraculous interference of God. There is not the slightest doubt, were your English history written by a Hebrew of the time of the kings, that the eclipse and the thunder-storm at Cregy, and that the storms which broke the Armada on the rocks of England and Scotland, would have been imputed to a miraculous interference by God with the course of nature. We do not believe these to have been miraculous; but we do believe them, with the Jew, to be of God. But we must also believe that they are contained in the order of the world, not disorderly elements arbitrarily introduced. That is, while believing in God as the Director and Ruler of human affairs, we must also believe in him as the Director and Ruler of the course of nature. While we believe revelation, we must not disbelieve God's other revelation in science. One is as necessary to believe in as the other.

We see in all things this law holding good,—that God's judgments are natural. In these apparently supernatural judgments, it would also hold good, if we knew all; and our attitude toward science, therefore, should not be an attitude of attack, or even an attitude of defence, but an attitude of ready assistance and inquiry. We should endeavor, as religious men, not to attack scientific men because they endeavor to discover truth, but to assist them with all our power, knowing that, the more we do in this way, the better chance there is of

getting at the truth which will reconcile the teaching of science with the teaching of revelation. At present, we force on them the attitude of opposition, we call them names, we ourselves are frightened out of our senses at every new discovery. We are faithless men. Necessarily, men of science attack us with contempt for our unbelief, and they are right; though it is curious to watch how Pharisaism and priestcraft are creeping upon them, and how their hierarchy are reproducing, in intolerance and ignorance of our position, the very sins and mistakes of which they accuse us. It would be worth while if we were both to try the other mode of action, and see if truth would not better come out of union than out of disunion.

There is another class of occurrences which have been called judgments of God, but to which the term "judgment" is inapplicable. The circumstance mentioned in the text is an example of these, and the violent destruction of human life by the late hurricane of Tortola is another of the same type. About the latter, I wish, in conclusion, to say a few words.

There are even now some who say that the sufferers under these blows of nature suffer because they are under the special wrath of God.

What does Christ say to that? He bluntly contradicts it. "I tell you nay,"—it is not so. There are not a few who still blindly think that suffering proves God's anger. Has the Cross taught us nothing better than that, revealed to us no hidden secret,—not the explanation given by a fierce theology, that there we see God's necessary anger expended on a surety, but the healing truth that there God's Love died for the sake of

man, and that the self-sacrifice did not expiate wrath, but manifest eternal Life,—was necessarily the salvation of man from death? The instant we realize this, our view of suffering is changed. We see it always, not as the misery-making, but as the redemptive, power in the world. There is no pain, mental or physical, which is not a part of God's continual self-sacrifice in us, and which, were we united to life, and not to death, we should not see as joy. Who regrets that the martyrs perished so cruelly? Not they themselves, not the Church whose foundations they cemented with their blood! Sympathy we can give, but regret? To regret their death is to dishonor them. Who can say that the death and pain of thousands in America for a great cause is matter of indignant sorrow? They died,—half a million of them,—to establish a principle, and so to redeem from curse and degradation, for all the future, millions of their countrymen; and they suffered devotedly, and died well. And those young hearts in Italy who fell on the vine-slopes of Mentana, fighting to the last, were they fools or redeemers? Redeemers, if the Cross be true. Every man who dies for Italy adds to Italy a new element of salvation, and makes it more impossible that she should much longer exist either as the slave of tyrants or the dupe of kings. It is an eternal law,—if you wish to save a thing, die for it; if you wish to redeem a man, suffer for him. And, when God lets men suffer and gives them to pain and death, it is not the worst or the guiltiest, but the best and the purest, whom he often chooses for his work; for they will do it best. Men wring their hands, and weep and wonder; but the sufferers themselves accept the pain in

the joy of doing redemptive work, and pass out of the region of complaint into that of the nobler spirit which rejoices that it is counted worthy to die for men.

But, say others, God is cruel to permit such loss. Three thousand souls have perished in this hurricane. Is this your God of love?

But look at the history of the hurricane. A mass of heated air ascends, along a line of heated water. Two currents dash in right and left to fill the space: they clash, and a whirlwind, rotating on a vast scale, sweeps along the line. It is the only way in which the equilibrium of the air can be restored. Those who object to this arrangement will perhaps prefer that the air should be left quiet, in order to protect their notion of a God of love. Well, what is the result? Instead of three thousand by a hurricane, thirty thousand perish by a pestilence.

“But why restore it so violently? Could not God arrange to have a uniform climate over all the earth?” We are spiritually puzzled; and, to arrange our doubts, God must make another world! We know not what we ask. A uniform climate over all the earth means simply the death of all living beings. It is the tropic heat and the polar cold which cause the currents of the ocean and the air, and keep them fresh and pure. A stagnant atmosphere, a rotting sea, that is what we ask for. It is well God does not take us at our word. When we wish the hurricane away, we wish away the tropic heats in the West Indies and along the whole equator. What do we do then? We wish away the Gulf Stream, and annihilate England. How long would our national greatness last, if we had here the climate of Labrador.



More than half of the solemn folly which is talked about a God of love not permitting these physical calamities is due to pure ignorance, is due to sceptical persons never reading God's revealed book of nature. A mere smattering of meteorology would answer all spiritual doubts of this kind of God's tenderness.

Because a few perish, is God to throw the whole world into confusion? The few must be sometimes sacrificed to the many. But they are not sacrificed without due warning. In this case, God tells us plainly, in his book of nature, that he wants to keep his air and his seas fresh and clean for his children to breathe and sail upon. The West Indies is the place where this work is done for the North Atlantic and its borders; and, unless the whole constitution of the world be entirely changed, that work must be done by tornadoes. God has made that plain to us; and to all sailing and living about warm currents like the Gulf Stream it is as if God said: "Expect my hurricanes: they must come. You will have to face danger and death, and it is my law that you should face it everywhere in spiritual as well as physical life; and to call me unloving because I impose this on you is to mistake the true ideal of your humanity. I mean to make you active men, not slothful dreamers. I will not make the world too easy for my children. I want veteran men, not untried soldiers,—men of endurance, foresight, strength, and skill for my work,—and I set before you the battle. You must face manfully those forces which you call destructive, but which are in reality reparative. In the struggle, all that belongs to your intellect—*invention, activity, imagination, forethought, combination*—will be enkindled and developed, and all

the nobler qualities of the spirit—love to me and man, faith in me and man, sympathy with the race, tender guardianship, the purity of life which is born of activity of charity—will enter into you and mould you into my likeness.”

Brethren, we cannot complain of the destructive forces of nature. We should have been still savages, had we not to contend against them. But, oh! we might bitterly complain of the ruin wrought by them, if the souls who perish in the contest died for evermore.

What happened when the “Rhone,” in mid-day midnight, went down with all its souls on board? Was it only the descent of a few bodies of men and women into the silence of an ocean death, or not rather the ascension of a number of emancipated spirits into life? When the hungry sea had swallowed all, and the loud waves rolled onward unconcerned, where were the dead? We know not where; but this we do believe: they were better off than they had been alive, the good in that they had entered into their rest, the evil in that God had taken in hand more sharply to consume their evil. For he will not let us go, evil or good, till he has brought us all to his perfection. It matters little whether we die by hurricane on the sleepless sea, or quietly by disease in the sleeping city: the result is the same, we go to a Father who is educating us, we fall into the hands of Eternal Justice.

## LIBERTY.

1874.

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”—Rom. xiv., 5.

LIBERTY is one of the ideas on which the progress of mankind depends, and on it I speak to-day. It is, of course, necessary that, as far as possible, I should define what I mean by it, else we pass into that mere fine talk which produces a momentary and inactive enthusiasm, and does not support that love and devotion to liberty which is the parent of activity. If an idea is to rule life, we must be able to say what we mean by it. Otherwise, like Ixion, we embrace a cloud.

It is now said that liberty is not only an indefinite term, but that it is nothing more than a negation. We are told, in order to prove its indefiniteness, that it has meant different things to different people and at different times; and that, if you ask a number of persons, they will give different explanations of it according to their prejudices or desires. And that is true enough. But, all the same, it does not prove that the idea is indefinite in itself. It is the characteristic of any large idea to take different forms at different times,—in fact, it must do so: it is the characteristic of an idea to grow as mankind

advances, and its form is therefore sure to change. Outwardly, it must always be in a condition of weaving and unweaving, of ebb and flow, of birth and death. But, if people took the trouble, they could at any time arrive at its root, and express that in a definite statement. That trouble they do not take, and naturally enough. They are too closely involved in the struggle for a particular part of the idea, to ask themselves about the other parts and to collect them all under one expression. That is the work of the student.

But, again, the idea of liberty does not seem one whit indefinite to those who at any period are struggling for it. Those who loved and fought for it at the great Rebellion, or at any time in our history, knew right well what they contended for. It may have been only part of the idea for which they fought, but it was a definite part of it. And we, looking back now on our own history and on the history of man, can point to fifty great human efforts for liberty, and say, All those were struggles for portions of the idea of liberty, and the results arrived at are definite parts of the idea. We can take these results, generalize them, and find one expression which will include them all. And, having found that expression, we can predict, with some accuracy, the new forms the idea is likely to take in the future, and define them.

It is really nonsense to say that the idea of liberty is only a negation. Men do not feel so strongly about any mere negation as they do about liberty, and when a man feels, I am free, or I am not free, he is feeling about something which is as positive to him as his own existence.

The difficulty, however, in any clear definition, arises from this: that the necessary action of the State in restriction of absolute freedom of action must be considered. There are many things people cannot be allowed to do; there are times when for the safety of the whole, or for the growth of the whole State, certain things, as, for example, liberty to burn one's self alive in India, or to keep one's children from school in England, must be prohibited.

The statement, then, which we desire to generalize from all the various definitions of liberty at different times, ought to be one which should not interfere with the just and recognized work of the State, and at the same time one which should not be so wide as to allow the State to ride roughshod over it, which should again and again step in and prevent the State from falling into its common habit of meddling too much, of enacting restrictive laws for the sake of expediency.

I should express, then, the idea of liberty in this way: that every sane person has the absolute right of free thought and its expression, and that there should not be any restraint whatsoever placed on his expression of thought on any subject. That I hold to be the last generalization of the idea of liberty, and I want no more. It gives me all I want. In politics, when every one is entirely free to discuss the different forms of government, to think his own thoughts and to say his say about them, the best form of government and the freest will be arrived at in the end. All we want is absolute freedom of thought and discussion, even of subjects supposed to be dangerous to the State, even of forms of government which directly contradict the existing form. And, on

the whole, we have got that in England, and, having got it, we can in the end make prevail any new parts of the idea of liberty we may wish to work out. If those parts are really necessary to the idea, we have only to proclaim them, and they will win their way in time.

In the case of religious liberty, the same thing holds. We should have the right to think and express our thoughts on all religious subjects, and there should be no State restraint whatsoever upon this. That is also, on the whole, the case in this country. The existence of a State Church may seem to deny it, with its subscriptions and legal restrictions. And up to a certain point it does, and for myself I have no doubt that before long a State Church will perish. But it has felt the general influence of the idea. Its work for the last twenty years has not been one of restriction. It has added no new restraints; on the contrary, it has so loosened obligations that, so far as the law goes, almost any religious opinion, a few doctrines being distinctly held, may be expressed within its limits. Subscription has been reduced by law to a merely nominal thing; and so far as State restriction goes, and leaving out the freaks of individual conscience, he would be a very subtle person who did not feel himself, provided he was not a pure theist or an atheist, at a very large liberty of thought in the English Church. At present, it is the religious body in which men's opinions are allowed the fullest freedom, in which the idea of liberty, in its relation to religion, has the largest development.

This, then, which we find in England nearly complete, the right, wholly unrestrained, of individual thought and of its expression, is the best and most definite expression

of the idea of liberty. It is the real ground of all the noble struggles for freedom that the world has seen. When we get back as far as we can to the farthest cause of wars of liberty, of reformations and revolutions for liberty, that is the last expression which we come to. That idea, then, is the root of all developments of liberty, the centre whence all the various radii diverge. And that is what we are to love and devote our lives to, and die for, if need be; and in loving it, and in sacrifice for it, we love and sacrifice ourselves for the race. Whenever we say, think, and do anything inspired by it, no matter how humble or how retired our life, we assist the onward movement of man: whenever we deny it or are false to it in act, even in the little range of our own family, we are living for ourselves and injuring mankind.

The State that in all its work consistently holds to this idea of liberty promotes the good, not only of its own special subjects, but the good of the whole race. The State that in any way whatsoever prescribes it or disables it injures itself, and injures man.

Now, I call that definite enough: thought and its expression are to be absolutely free, no restraint whatever is to be placed upon them. That is the idea. And, if you ask where are the restraints to be found, then, against evil thoughts and evil opinions, and the evil their propagation is likely to do, I say that they are only to be rightly found within the idea itself,—in the free expression (in opposition to evil opinions) of good opinions, and in the victory these are certain to have in the end.

And now, having got our definition, and therefore our idea of liberty, what are the religious grounds on

which we cling to it? In stating these,—and these have not been stated, the subject has not been approached from this side,—I will show my reason for the assumption I make, that the best opinions and ideas will, after free discussion, prevail in the end.

1. This idea on the side of religion is founded on the fact that God has made each one of us a distinct person; that we each possess, and are bound to act up to, an individuality. I have an intellect, heart, character, and life of my own, modified by circumstances and by the influence of others, but my own; and I have a body of thought as the result of this, which I have a more absolute right to than I have to my property, and which I am bound to express by a stronger duty than that which binds me to my property. Why is that? From the religious point of view, I answer, Because it is God who has made you an individual, it is he himself who in you has made you a representative of a distinct phase of his being, a doer of a distinct part of his work. Christianity says the same thing. It revealed and insisted on the distinct and individual relation of every separate soul to God and to its fellows. And in so doing it fell in with the strongest element in human nature, the personal element, that element which in its ceaseless growth in each man has created the idea of liberty. Falling in with that element, it promoted necessarily the idea of liberty; and, if anything is remarkable in Christianity, it is the way in which it gave an impulse to individual thought and to the freedom of self-development. When God in Christ said to every man and woman, You are infinitely worthy as a person in my eyes, you have a distinct personal relation to



me: your thought is your own, and you must rather die than allow it to be forced, or give it up for the sake of earthly rewards, he confirmed and gave a new impulse to every effort of liberty, and he fixed its idea. Of course, the whole range of the ideas of the cultured and political classes were against that doctrine of individuality, and it had slow growth. The Church itself, more wise than the State, took the popular ideas of restriction of opinion, and used them with the help of outward force. But the idea of liberty of thought and its expression was too strong for State and Church in the end; and, though their restrictions linger still, the idea has prevailed and will prevail, for God directs it. No one can now say it is indefinite or a negation, without blindness. In every reformation of religion, in every political revolution, it has been the one grand thought at their root. God has made it pretty plain that it is one of the ideas which are absolutely needful for the progress of mankind; and it is founded on the first religious and Christian idea, that every single soul is a distinct child of God, for whose perfect development as a person he cares and works.

But that development is impossible, if thought and its expression are restrained. For a father to do that for a child is bad enough, for a State or a Church to do it for a large number of their subjects is worse still. And, whenever this liberty is repressed by force of law or arms, those who do it are fighting against God. And men have always felt this; and every struggle for liberty of thought becomes a religious one, and ought to be considered as such. And it is confessed to be such by those who share in the struggle, except when

the Church has taken the side of repression, and forced the contenders for liberty into irreligion. But whatever side the Church took, and however irreligious the contenders for liberty were, the struggle itself, in its absolute relation to things, was religious; for it was on the side of God.

That is one religious foundation of the idea. The other religious ground of the idea is in truth an extension of the former. It is this,—God is educating not only persons, but the race. His end is to bring it to perfection. But he does this not in the manner of a paternal despot who makes people good by force, not in any supernatural way, but within the ordinary laws of human nature.

He does not tell men what is best, and impel them into it at once. He respects the freedom of the creatures he has kindled into being, and bids them find out through experience and effort the best things; while he keeps at the same time a general direction of the whole, assists the effort when it is toward good, and moves in the whole race and its history as a spirit of love and freedom and power and goodness.

It follows, if this theory be true, and it follows as a part of the theory, that there is a necessity, in order that men should discover what is good to believe and act on, that they should go through every possible view of anything they need to believe or use, and arrive at the right idea of it by exhausting all the wrong ones. Then and not till then can they finally discern the right one, and saying, This form, and this, and this of the idea, are wrong, and proved to be wrong by their evil results, but this is the right one, and proved to be so by every day's

experience, secure at last, after ages of discussion, an eternal truth.

We hold then, first, that God practically says to man : Fight out every question. I give you absolute freedom of thought on them, and I wish you to use it. I wish you when you have any thought on them to express it, and I give you absolute freedom to do so. And that is the real state of things which we find to have prevailed on looking back at history. Every great question, every great idea, has been represented in a thousand forms of thought; and all have been freely fought over. Some are still under discussion, as the idea of liberty, for example; others, we may say, are settled in civilized countries, but it has taken centuries to settle them. On the whole, and often by reason of the very elements which seem to oppose it, there has been in this world a fierce freedom of discussion and thought; and it has had its source in God.

We hold, secondly, since God guides the world, that however fierce the battle, and however confusing the chaos of opinions, the best and noblest thing will in the end prevail, and its idea in its right and perfect form stand clear at last, and be recognized by all. And when all the ideas which are necessary for man to believe and act on have gone through this long series of experiments, and are known and loved by all, then will the race be perfect.

Now, these things, being believed, are a ground of the idea of liberty I have put forward. We ought to fall in with the method of God's education of the race; and the way to do it is for the State in public life, and for ourselves in social and private life, to give perfect liberty of

thought and its expression on all possible subjects. But, then, there will be continual contest, disturbance, difference, and no peace. Certainly, what else can you expect? It is the natural result. It will happen whether you like it or not, and all your efforts after repression of thought will only increase the disturbance. You are fighting, when you restrain thought, against a law of humanity, and, instead of making peace, you only double war. Recognize the law, chime in with it, and assist and stimulate the battle of opinion. The peace you desire can only be won through this war. Not till every opinion on any large question is worked through can peace on that question be attained.

But men are frightened to do this. They say that immoral or evil opinions will be put forward; and that this will hinder the progress of mankind, that opinions dangerous to the welfare of the State, dangerous to liberty, dangerous to political progress, will be put forward, and that these will do cruel damage. Therefore, they think there is no hope of solution except in authority, in repressing or discouraging by the strong hand of the State thoughts which we know to be evil for mankind or perilous to the State. I say that is not only a sin, in that it violates liberty, but a folly, in that it has been proved a hundred times that it does not attain its end. It only strengthens the false opinion, it only gives new life to the dangerous one. Place a dam across a river, you do not diminish the volume of water behind it, you only give it force in that particular place. You may be very comfortable below it for a time where you have lessened the amount of water; but the time comes when the river swells, and then where is your dam, and what is its result? The devastation of an inundation.

“But, if we allow absolute freedom of thought and expression, we do not produce any clear ideas on any subject, only a chaos of opinions, as, for example, on the subject of liberty.” That is only too likely to be your view, if you do not believe in a God who is educating the race. And you are driven back, having no faith or hope, on the plan of authority; but the true lover of liberty, who believes in God as a divine and guiding spirit in men, has not only hope, but certainty, that a solution will be found. He knows that the best and highest view of the idea will in the end prevail; and that the more liberty of discussion he gives, even of evil and dangerous opinions, the sooner will the solution be arrived at.

These are the religious grounds on which we base our idea of liberty; and for that idea, so founded, we are ready to die. We ought to love it with all our heart and soul; we ought to sacrifice anything and everything for it; we ought to devote our life and all our powers to extend it; we ought to be true to it, no matter how alluring the temptation to palter with it. And we ought to love it as a part of our religion, for we know that it is the will of God, when we look at the revelation he gave through Christ, and at the revelation he has given in the course of history. I hold, then, that all restraint of opinion and its expression is irreligious. All disabling laws are irreligious, no matter how expedient they may seem; that is, all laws which make the expression of thought on any subjects whatever a crime to be punished by the State. The State has nothing to do with opinion. It is quite different when opinions are put into overt acts. Of these, the State has cognizance. It has a perfect

right to step in there, and say, You have a right to hold your opinion, to preach it, and make it prevail, if you can. If you can, it will, through winning a majority to its side, become part of the law of the State; but, till you do make it prevail, I have a right to prevent your putting it into act, and to punish you if you do, and in so doing I do not violate but secure liberty. And, if you do get a very large number to hold your view, and not being able to make it prevail in the free council of the State, and seeing, too, that it is getting weaker instead of stronger,—as, for example, was the case in America with regard to the question of slavery,—you choose to support it overtly in arms, I have a right, in the interests of liberty of thought, to go to war with you, and compel you, if I can, to bow to the more prevalent opinion.

That would be the case in free States where liberty of thought and its expression on political subjects is allowed by the State.

Then there is another class of questions much discussed at present,—marriage, education, and others. To insist on civil marriages, to make education compulsory, to say that every clergyman connected with the State should take a university degree, does not in the slightest infringe on the idea of liberty I have laid down, if the State at the same time permits the freest possible discussion of these things; if it says, Preach, teach, protest, agitate against them as much as you will, strive your best to make the opposite views prevail. But, if it not only frames these laws, but also makes it penal to agitate against them by free speech, then it does violate liberty, and is committing a sin and a folly.

And this I hold that Germany is now doing in the matter, not of the above laws, but on the question of papal infallibility. It has said, To preach this doctrine is dangerous to the State. It conflicts with my ideas, it hinders progress, it is injurious to freedom, and I will make the teaching of it penal. Your priests have taken the oath of allegiance to the State, and belong to a State Church. This new faith of yours contradicts your oath, and you must give up the expression of it. You may say that you submit to the rule of the State Church; but, if you teach this opinion, I will hold that it violates those rules, and make a law to that effect to restrain your opinion.

The State has no right to do that, if it pretends to be a free State. Its action violates the idea of liberty. If German liberals say that this is being true to liberty, they must be either very blind or very hypocritical. I do not accuse them of the latter. They are really carried away by hatred of an illiberal system into a deliberate violation of liberty. They choose to violate liberty for the sake of what they think to be liberty. They have got no clear idea of what the idea of liberty is. And they are utterly wrong. They are placing expediency before right; they are fighting against human nature in fighting against the free thought of the individual and its expression: they are fighting against God in fighting against his will that all truth should be arrived at only by absolute freedom of discussion. And it is downright persecution; and surely we know that persecution of opinion is wrong. If I am told truly, there are a number of Roman Catholic churches entirely shut up in the Rhine Provinces. What does that mean?

It is not only wrong, it is folly. Have we not learned yet, has history not yet made it clear, that persecution is a mistake,—that it invariably weakens the State, even when it gains its end of destroying or expelling those it persecutes? What did it do for Spain when it drove out the Moors and decimated the Jews? What for France, when it made the country too hot for the Huguenots? It is double folly at this time of the world, when it cannot do its work completely by extermination, but only proceed by fine and imprisonment. The result will show its folly. It will be to strengthen ultramontanism in Germany, and to extend its life. For the State to make its opponents martyrs is to deepen their power. Ultramontanism will die out; but this sort of thing will be a cordial to its decaying body. It is further wrong in that such a law directly tempts men to do wrong. No sin could be greater or more degrading than that any man, believing an opinion to be right, should cease to teach it for the sake of escaping punishment or of gaining worldly reward; and all laws that make opinion penal tempt men to that. You may say individual opinion must be sacrificed to the welfare of the State. Yes, the individual may do that of his own free will, and be right in doing so. But that is very different from this, which forces him or tries to force him to do so: it is not a sacrifice you claim from him, it is self-degradation; and the degradation of any citizen of the State weakens the State by the lowering of the moral tone of the citizen. And, lastly, the very excuse made for it is as wrong and as foolish as it is itself. “All ultramontane views oppose and hinder liberty, and retard the progress of man: we are right to repress their



being taught because they do so." That is, liberty is violated for the sake of liberty. This is the old iniquitous thing, a leaf out of the book of the very Jesuitry they are opposing, "The end justifies the means, let us do evil for the sake of good." That is a wrong excuse, it is a foolish excuse also. To tell lies for the sake of truth has never succeeded; and to violate liberty—no matter how expedient it may seem, no matter how dangerous to liberty the opinions repressed may be—has never strengthened liberty. And just as much harm as pious frauds have done to religion, so much harm to be illiberal for the sake of liberty does to liberty.

It is in order to express sympathy with the German struggle against ultramontanism, of which this persecuting law is an integral part, that there are meetings to be held this week in London. I trust that those who direct them will, while approving of some of the Falk laws, mark their disapproval of that one which violates the idea of liberty I have ventured to lay down. If they are liberals and they suffer themselves to be betrayed into approval of it, they will be contradicting all the principles we have been contending for during more than two centuries. I fear that many will be hurried away through dislike of ultramontanism, and, for the sake, as they think, of liberty, to some sort of approval. I am already dismayed by hearing the old arguments used by those who opposed the repeal of the penal laws against the Catholics, arguments which went on the ground that Catholic opinions were dangerous to liberty, used now by men who have been up to this moment, when they are irritated by the views of the ultramontanes, true partisans of liberty. And I and many others

are asking, Have men really no clear idea of liberty, no firm ground on which to place it, that now prejudice or expediency at once carries them away? It is, of course, hard to resist using authority when one has to contend against a retrograde and degrading set of ideas, such as those of the ultramontanes; but surely we ought to be able to hold fast in the midst of our irritation to our idea, and keep it in its purity. And I am very sorry, as a matter of wisdom and for the sake of liberty, that the meeting is to be held. It will have two results: it will strengthen ultramontaniam in this country, and it will raise the old, wild, unreasoning Protestant cry, with all its attendant intolerance, in the mass of the uncultivated people of this city.

It is in cases like this that we are called upon to hold fast to our idea. Do not let hatred of that which is against liberty lead you to be false to liberty. Love your idea too well to be untrue to it, even for its own sake. Believe in it too strongly to be afraid of any opinions that oppose it. Say to men like the ultramontanes, who stand in the way of truth and knowledge and freedom, I believe in liberty: therefore, the more you express your opinions, the better. Say to yourself, God wishes free thought and individual expression of it; therefore, I know I am right in refusing to use authority of any kind for its repression, and in disapproving the action of any State so far as it uses it. Say to yourself, God is educating the world through the battle of free thought: therefore, the noblest view of the idea of liberty must prevail in the end; and, in order that it may more quickly prevail, let us exhaust by free discussion of them all the ignoble ones. I know that all the false ones

will go down: my part is to be true to the true idea, to love it, to devote myself to it, to sacrifice myself for it. And in doing so I devote myself, so far forth, to the race of man; I love and sacrifice myself for man; I follow the example and live by the spirit of Jesus Christ.

## THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL AND GOD.

1875.

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose *one* of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ?” — LUKE xv., 5.

WITHIN this outward world, which we think so real, but which is only a shadow, lies the inward actual world. It is invisible to our eyes, inaudible to our ears. Visions of it come and go before us, notes of its music, hints of its truths, just touch us, who are common men, and go. It is hard ; for all life and all knowledge and all rest consist in our winning some of its realities, in finally finding enough of it to gain the power of living in it. Happily for us, there are men and women born into the world who are very near it, who live on its frontier, who often pass into it. These have what we call genius. It is the mark of genius that it sees the invisible world, hears its music, feels its thoughts. You may think I speak only of the spiritual world which has to do with the spirit of man in its relation to God. Not so : that is only one part of the actual world of which our world is the shadow. The true world is as much the invisible one in all the secular realms of thought and feeling and act as it is in the spiritual realms of thought and feeling,

and we must get into it at all points before we can truly live. It is men of genius who are the mediators between us and it, the way by which we enter into it. They reveal the unknown life and music and truth: we see the things they reveal, love them, and shall finally attain them.

The artist sees within the block a beautiful thing, and carves it for men; and it becomes a living thing to him and us, a thing not of this world, but of the invisible world. It lives for us, and we love it. The story of Pygmalion is no dream. Another sees in every quiet nook among the hills, in every stormy battle of the clouds, not the relations of color and form that seem to us, but the emotions and life of the living Being, the movement of whose heart and brain makes the world to us; and it is these he paints. We look at the picture, and we see the invisible world through his work. The great natural philosopher, like Newton or Faraday, sees the ideas that make the material world hang together, and knows the truth he has to prove before he proves it. The great poet does not build up by reasoning the talk of Othello and Iago, and Romeo and Juliet: he has heard them speak, and seen the chamber at Cyprus, the orchard at Verona,—only the names are nothing, the world in which they are is the invisible world of the human emotions. The great musician listens with no earthly ear to his music. That which he makes us hear he has heard, sung, and played where no waves of air repeat the vibrations.

Eye hath not seen nor ear heard what these men feel. But, when they make them into form, we hear and see, though it is only dimly, something of that invisible and

inaudible world which is the true one, and we are led away from the apparent world which surrounds us to love and seek the other; and, as we seek, we learn a little, and that little helps us forward, till more and more our inner eye and ear are awakened, and at last we see and hear for ourselves, and then we are happy. We have lost the shadow world, and gained the substantial. We know the worth of the sensible things, that they are shadows useful only to tell us that there are real things that cast them. And, the real things attained, we think no more of their shadows.

In this effort, of what use is the intellect acting by itself? It is of no use at all till the truth is seen, and it never sees or can see truth. It has to do with the phenomenal world alone, with the shadows of the true. All it can do is to make the shadows darker and their outlines more defined. Those who work by it alone think when they have done this that they have discovered truth. They have only made truth more difficult to reach, because they have persuaded us, as so many try to persuade us now, that the shadows are real. Truth is never *discovered*: it is seen, and then revealed. When it is seen, and only then, is the intellect of any use. Then comes in its service. It makes the truth more clear, confirms and fits it for practical use by showing how the shadows we call facts bear witness to the truth that casts them, by showing the relation the apparent world bears to the real, by enabling us to make use of the shadows to grasp the real things more firmly.

I daresay few of you will believe all this. It may be true, you will say, in the spiritual world. It is not true in the realms of art, science, or philosophy. I think it is.

I make no distinction between the methods and principles of the spiritual and secular worlds. There is one mind at the root of both, and in both the mere intellect is worthless till truth is seen. In both, all truth comes to us by Revelation; and, when Revelation has given it, then it is reasoned on for confirmation and application.

Those whom we call men of genius in knowledge and art, we call prophets in the spiritual world. They are seers, who see directly the truths of God's relation to man, and of man's to God. They declare these truths, they do not attempt to prove them: they let them prove themselves. Some receive them at once, others say they must prove them by reasoning; but they can only be seen, not proved. They can never be reasoned upon with any practical use till the reasoner has felt the life and seen the beauty in them. And it will be hard for a man who thinks intellect the first and greatest power to do this, for they generally traverse and deny the reasoning of centuries. Naturally, for they deny the very existence of that which is apparent, that very thing on which the intellect only employs itself.

All this is illustrated by the scene and the parable on the main subject of which we preached last Sunday. Long theological reasonings had convinced the Pharisees and Scribes that their scheme of the universe of spirit was the only true one. It followed that all those who did not agree with them had nothing to do with God; that all those who, like Christ, disagreed with their opinions and practice, that all those whom their society rejected for certain open sins, like the publicans and sinners, were excluded. They thought no more of them as individuals: they classed them into one mass,

and called them the lost. The notion that God had to do with them as individuals, that he must consider them as such, was impossible to their intellect. They did not even try to prove a negative, for they could not conceive a negative. Christ, on the other hand, knew of their reasonings, but thought them contemptible. Their world was not his world at all. He did not reason, he saw. And this is what he saw: he saw God in distinct personal relation with every human soul present. He saw them all as children, each with a separate being, and each connected with God and dear to him in a different way from the others. Each was a living personality linked to a living Father.

That was the invisible fact he saw; and it cut right across all the long lines of theology which the Pharisees had laid down after years of intellectual work on their notions of God. And no wonder; for it is plain, supposing it true, that it is not a truth which the intellect can reach or prove. It shines by its own light, if it shines at all. Even when it is received, all the intellect of man can do with it is to apply it, not to prove it. It cannot be proved in the way of reasoning.

Indeed, the intellect of man, working out its reasonings on society, on the races of mankind, on men's physical and moral constitution, has always arrived at conclusions which either directly deny that truth, or implicitly deny it. It must have struck the Pharisees as ridiculous: it is equally absurd to a number of religious sects to-day, who cannot conceive that the Roman Catholic, or the Unitarian, or the atheist, or the open sinner, or the High Churchman, or the liberal theologian, is each the special child of God. They are



lost classes, not individuals, whom God is seeking. It contradicts just as much all the tendencies of ancient and modern philosophies, and all the tendencies of modern social and physiological science. It runs counter to all that scientific thought, which makes us automatons or machines, or mixes us up with nature, or labels us only as superior animals. It is equally at variance with all the philosophies which, beginning from biology, make us only the creatures of development, not only in body, but in conscience, thought, and feeling, and mingle us up with the whole race, which say, "Humanity lives, but its parts each perish." Yes: it is altogether unconformable with all the most laborious efforts by which human reasoning, working in its favorite daylight, has tried to explain what we are, and whence we come. It proclaims the distinct individuality and eternity and divinity of each human soul, the individual and separate preciousness of each. It isolates each man with God, though in another point of view it unites them all with him and one another. Pharisee and Scribe might say what they would, lose the thought of the sinner in the sinfulness of the class, see in the publican a necessary outcast (part of the dross by purging itself of which the gold of society becomes clear), Christ, the Seer of the Invisible, held their speech as vile, and saw—what? Saw all the pity of the earth, and the Mighty God, and the whole host of heavenly intelligences concentrating their eager thought, their passionate endeavor, their love and interest, and their joy round one wandering human soul. "What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose *one* of them. . . . Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of heaven over *one* sinner that repenteth."

That is a revelation,—one of the invisible truths which we believe, because it exalts our whole nature and makes beautiful the world of man, and makes God beautiful, and fills our life with joy and hope and self-sacrifice and faith and trust, and thrills us with emotion in which we rise into God,—but which we do not believe, but would rather deny, when we investigate the problem of mankind by the help of the intellect alone.

Christ then declares here the absolute distinctness of individual being. But on what ground? On this,—that each man is in separate and unbreakable union with God. There is, properly speaking, only one Being in the whole universe, only one self-existing Being. To conceive that seems to be a necessity of thought, if we do not deny Being. But the very power of conceiving it seems to prove that we are part of it. We could not conceive of self-existent Being, were we not conscious ourselves of Being; and to be conscious of Being is to be conscious of God. When we feel that we are, we feel God in us, or rather God himself becomes in us self-conscious. A part of him, a phase of his beauty or knowledge or love, takes form in us. This is our individuality; and it would be perfect in us, as it was in Christ, if we could feel, as he did, that all our thoughts were thoughts of God, that all our words and actions were the speech and deed of God,—if we could say, “I and my Father are one.” Toward that we are struggling all our lives; to that, at some time or another, eternity will bring us. And the first step toward it is to believe that we are (by our very being, and because we are) indissolubly united to God; so that, if we wander away from him, he must seek us, and we must be found of him. And the *must* consists

in this: that, if we were lost, a part of Infinite Being would be missing forever, which is an absurdity.

There exists, then, between us and God a distinct personal relation, different in each person, and different forever. No one can ever be mixed up with another, no one can ever approach God or be approached by him, in exactly the same way. Of all the infinite number of human spirits, there has not been one whose relation to God has been the same. In one aspect, in our personal relation to God, each one of us and he are alone in the universe.

Nothing can proclaim more strongly or create more vividly the doctrine of human individuality, and it is a Christian creation. It has run into great evils: in its corruptions, it has stimulated religious selfishness, and made persecutions, and brought forth asceticism, and created a license of thought and act which has done harm, or seemed to do harm. But the evils sink into nothing before the good that has flowed from it. It has been at the root of all liberty of thought, of all the struggles for political liberty. It has, in claiming and carrying out man's right to develop his own being, been at the root of all increase of knowledge, of the arts, of culture. It has also, in so doing, made manifold and complex, with a million individual efforts, all the simple ideas and feelings, so that life has been indefinitely enriched. It has placed ideas and truths in a thousand different ways before mankind, so that the universe of thought and feeling is more infinitely varied than the universe of nature, and human life, as the world goes on, grows in interest and delight. In its infinite production of infinite forms of spiritual thought and emotion, it has

made us know something of the infinite God. It is an idea which is the salt of the earth, and we owe its revelation to Christ.

And I am sure it was wanted and is wanted. The tendency of society is to make men all of one pattern, to repress all that is original, to tyrannize over all individuality. Imperialism tries to force all thought into harmony with the will of one, democracy into harmony with the will of the many. Religious opinion classes us into bad and good, and forgets the infinite modifications of both. Political party wants us to act with our party, and classes us by party (justly enough, as religion also, for its own purposes); but it is one tendency the more against individuality. Science tells us that we are necessary results of all that has gone before, that we could not help ourselves, and that we cannot do so now. Given such a body, such arrangement toward growth of atoms, such a disarrangement in them as we call hereditary disease, we will be this or that infallibly. That wars against individuality. The root of individuality is that we have a living will within, which may be master, and can conquer circumstances, and compel development, in spite of nature; which is not the effect, but the master (by right of a different and higher being in it), of our physical nature. Science denies that, and I am very sorry for those who deny it. Of late, it has gone further; and now it tends to make us think of ourselves as only necessary parts of a great machine, and of our actions and thoughts as mechanical,—worse still, automatic, so that we cannot be said even to think or act truly at all. No, nor even to feel. A mother's love for her child is the resultant of a vast number of past

atomic motions. Our love for one another reduces itself at last to physical arrangement, our sense of beauty to the same.

What is the use of trying to prove all these things? They never can be proved; and, if they seemed to be proved, the mass of men — thank God! — would not believe them. They are very odious in themselves, and the efforts to prove them are mere waste of time and intelligence. It is almost pitiable to see all this hard work spent in trying to prove a negative the belief in which arises from these men having shut one of their eyes. It is more than pitiable, it is an evil thing to override the world with these theories; for they go with all the other tendencies which war against individuality. We cease to be persons: we are made by these theories only one of the forms of physical nature.

Then there are all the philosophers of to-day who wither the individual for the sake of the race. I have almost forsworn any more usage of the word "race." I have almost thought of giving up any more preaching of self-sacrifice for the use and good of the race; and I would do so, were it not to be as provincial as they, if I were to refuse to look at their side of the shield because they sit fixed in such ecstatic contemplation of it as to be unable to see the other, which asserts the importance of individual being. But, though one does not give up the truths which lie in the idea that we must surrender personal inclinations and live with the thought of the happiness and good of the coming humanity as one of our first motives, one is bound at the same time to protest against the whole swallowing the parts. The good of the race is not our only motive for life: it must

be coincident with careful self-development for the sake of our everlasting connection with God. That is selfish, they cry. No, it is not; for its end is union with perfect love. It is degrading to the loftier ideas, they cry. Is it? Compare the results in the case of ideas. This philosophy has lost the idea of God, and replaced it by the idea of a humanity which is destined to perish as a whole, and every part of which perishes forever, each soul dropping day by day into eternal night for the sake of those who also are to drop into an abyss of nothingness. Is that notion of a divinity to worship loftier than the idea of God? Is that notion of all-overmastering death, of the final destruction of all the thought and love and beauty and knowledge and art of man, loftier than the notion of their immortal continuance and activity? Oh, no! The degradation of thought is on the side of those who, in withering the individual for the race, annihilate God and Immortality, and finally wither forever the race. Look to the end: for what have they sacrificed their individuality? They have sacrificed it for the sake of a humanity which, individually and collectively, ends in the ridiculous and shameful tragedy of universal annihilation.

It is a faith inconceivably dull and hopeless and sorrowful; and looking on it all, on all the tendencies which war against individual being and against the strong and creative sense of it which is active in man, we turn with intense pleasure and faith to the revelation by Christ of our vivid and continuous personality.

And we need not be downcast about it, as if all these tendencies could damage it, nor need we think that man will lose this precious truth. Art and Christianity both

support it. Men who love art will always develop themselves just as they please, and will, if philosophy or society attempt to limit their lives by rule, rebel against them both; and, if science attempt to prove that they love or enjoy beauty or create it in a mechanical way or because they cannot help it, laugh at and despise science. To them there will always be a large part of their humanity, and that in their minds the highest, which has nothing to do with knowledge, and which transcends the understanding, and thinks its powers and its work commonplace.

Men who love God, and who feel that he loves them, who know that a direct personal relation is established between him and them, and that they are living beings forever, will equally and still more strongly resist the tendencies of which I speak. Religion, when it means the personal tie between a good Father who loves and a child whom he is educating, will always make individual men. Once a man feels, "I am myself God's, and he speaks and works in me and through me," he has that within him which forces him to make himself himself, which saves him from ever losing his personality or believing in any theory which directly, or by implication, puts it aside. Christianity is the saving of the individuality of man; and it is the thing best worth saving, not only for the man himself, but for the whole race. Yes, for the sake of the whole, it is the best thing. The true good of the whole does not consist in the repression, but in the strengthening of the individual. The true life of the whole does not consist in the dying of the parts, but in the intensity of the life of each part. The true growth of the race does not consist in the sacrifice of the parts

when they have grown for sixty years, but in their endless continuance in growth.

Nor is it less true that the Christian declaration of individuality is a stronger basis of union among men for mutual good than the sacrifice or the suicide of individuality. The true basis of union is not the union of dying men in a dying whole, but the union of living men in a living God. The true basis of mutual love is not the union of men who die daily for others who die also, but the union of all men to promote the loving life of all in God. The highest motive for love of our fellow-men and for universal love is found in the truth that we all love the same Father, and are all his children. That is the true and unconquerable ground of the brotherhood of humanity; and, while it creates infinite self-sacrifice, it retains individual life and the eternal growth of personality.

To hold it, to live by it, is not at least dull. Dull, do I say? It transfigures the world, and makes glorious our own life and all the lives of men. No one who believes it feels himself a machine: he feels the living God within him. No one can hold it, and yield to the dull monotony of society, or bend himself in stupid compliance to the rules of life the world lays down: he who lives by it laughs at the knowledge which pronounces his feelings necessary or his thoughts automatic. He knows better. Nothing will convince him that he is a congeries of atoms; nothing will prove to him that he is only matter; nothing will make him think that he is going to die. All that he has thought and felt and learned and done, out of which his personality has been made, will be a part of him for ever, and bring forth



new fruit in a new life. All his interests will remain, only they will grow more intense as his life develops; and they will grow more intense, not in a selfish individuality, but in one which will realize itself in losing self-consciousness, in living in all things, in eternal loving, and in the joy of loving.

And what he believes for himself, he believes for all. He sees all men, like himself, as living persons, growing, acting, thinking, rejoicing, and united forever into one vast and loving humanity. For through the infinite varieties of personalities which secure progress there runs one mighty spirit, the united spirit of a common love to Him, their Father, in whom they live and move and have their being, who sought them wandering on earth, who would not lose one of them, and who now has made them lie down in green pastures, and led them beside still waters,— one flock and one Shepherd.

## IMMORTALITY.—I.

1871.

“For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.”—LUKE XX., 38.

THERE is a common reason for the perverse denial of immortality. It is that man, when living solely for this world, cannot believe in a world to come. He who is blind has no conception of the stars. He who is without passion cannot believe in enthusiasm. He who lives for himself cannot believe in self-devotion.

And he who is living a base life cannot believe in a noble one. If his soul is plunged in the sensual, he cannot realize the spiritual. When his whole energies are given to this world, he cannot conceive or possess the world to come. There are, then, thousands of men calling themselves Christians, to whom immortal life is merely a name, to whom their little life is indeed “rounded with a sleep.”

Practically, they disbelieve in immortality. They may even inwardly go further, and deny it to themselves, should the question intrude upon their pleasure. But they do not deny it before the world. Something holds them back from boasting of their unbelief,—a consciousness that they have thrown aside a noble thing, a regret

which will steal in, that now they can no longer aspire beyond their present life. Unable to realize immortality themselves, they yet shrink from an open denial of it with a sense of shame and degradation. But, still more, it becomes a dreadful thing to them, if they have any sensitive reverence left for the sorrow of mankind, to throw doubt upon this doctrine. If true, it is so precious that it seems the race might bear any suffering, provided it was its fate at last. If it is only held to be false, and not proved false, a man may well doubt whether, on his own judgment alone, he should proclaim that he holds it false. There is a devotion to one's own truthfulness, which is, in certain circumstances, intolerable cruelty to others; and, in spiritual matters, where proof has not been attained, unless we clearly feel that to disclose our opinion is good for man, we are only Pharisees anxious to placard our honesty, when we loudly proclaim our negations in public or in private. Truthfulness without charity is a vice and not a virtue, as love without truthfulness to moral right becomes idolatry.

And men in general have felt this, and when they disbelieved in immortality have held their tongue.

Moreover, they have refrained, because they insensibly felt that the denial of immortality is practically atheism. Clinging still to the notion of a God, they connect with him their ideas of right and wrong. He is their source, and he allots their sanctions. But no one can long continue to believe in and to love a God who is assumed to give us these ideas, and then so forgets all about his gift and his creature as to plunge obedience and disobedience into the same nothingness; or who, by wilfully annexing

annihilation to all human lives alike, proclaims that in his eyes Tiberius, rotting to a shameless death in Caprea, is on the same level with the Saviour, dying on Calvary for the Truth. One must feel that such a God would be wicked. He would deny that very morality which we imagine he has implanted in us. We should be obliged to deny his existence, in order to retain our morality. To disbelieve in immortality is to disbelieve in God: with the fall of the one, falls the other.

And this also men have felt, and I know no instance where the denial of immortality has not led directly to atheism. Men did not like to realize, by putting their denial of immortality into speech, that they did not practically believe in God at all.

But these motives have now ceased to operate, at least to the same extent. Matters have taken a new phase. Immortality is boldly or quietly denied, not only by impure and selfish men, but by men of culture and of a high morality. It is accompanied, as it must necessarily be, by latent or overt atheism, as a cause or a result of the denial.

What are the particular causes of this denial at present? One is the prevalence of certain theological views which, once largely accepted, are now felt to be repugnant to the moral sense. Good men, some among the best and holiest of the race, have held these views, and lived and died by them. And it is a strong proof that theological opinions have no *necessary* connection with goodness that these men have been so good. It proves also that we cannot judge the morality of one time, so far as it relates to the morality of opinions, by the morality of another time. For few doubted then of the

accordance of these opinions with moral right; and now many persons distinctly, and it seems to me with truth, reject them as immoral.

Among these, the first is the conception of God. The conception of God's nature which has been laid before us for many years has brought many men at last to turn away from it with dismay and pain. They feel that the morality of the pulpit on this matter lags behind the moral feeling of society. God has been represented, they think, and I think with them, as selfish, as seeking his own glory at the expense of his creatures' welfare, as jealous, as arbitrary, as indulging in favoritism, as condemning all for the sake of one, as insisting on forms of temporary importance and binding them forever on the conscience, as ruining men for mistakes in doctrine, as claiming a blind submission of the conscience and the intellect, as vindictive, as the resolute torturer of the greater part of the human race by an everlasting punishment which presupposes everlasting evil; as, in one word, anything rather than the Father revealed in Jesus Christ. Much of this teaching remains still, though it is presented under a veil by which its coarser outlines are modified. It is accepted by many who either do not possess a strong and individual sense of morality, or who do not think or prefer not to think on the matter, lest they should shake the fabric of their easy faith or spoil their religious sentiment. But those who do, and whose moral feeling of right and wrong is sane and strong, turn away revolted from a God of this character, believe that to be immortally connected with him would be degradation, even the very horror of hell.

But not having been taught any other God, and being,

to a certain degree, culpably lazy about examining into the teaching of Christianity for themselves, they fall back on their last resource, and disbelieve in immortality. "It is better to perish forever than to be the slave of such a ruler. We deny his existence, and we deny the immortality he is said to promise. But, at the same time, we will be true to our sense of right and wrong; we will do what we can to help the race; we will have our immortality in the memories of the future, or in the 'Being of Humanity': but, as for ourselves, let us cease, for we could not live with the Being who has been described to us."

Now, I believe this to be, and no one need mistake my meaning, a really healthy denial of immortality, for it is founded on the denial of a false God. And so far as it is founded on the assertion of a true morality, so far as it is, though these men do not confess it as such, the assertion of the true God. The God who has been preached to men of late has now become to us an idol, that is, a conception of God lower than we ought to frame; and a revolt against that conception is not in reality a revolt against God, it is a protest against idolatry. I sympathize strongly, then, with that part of the infidel effort which is directed against these immoral views of God's character, though I am pained by the manner in which the attack is conducted; and it is my hope that the attack will lead our theologians to bring their teaching up to the level of the common moral feeling on this subject, and to reveal God as the Father of men in all the profound meaning of that term. The belief in immortality will then return, for the love of God will return to men. For it is impossible for any man to clearly see and

believe in the Father as revealed in Christ, and not passionately desire to draw nearer and nearer to him forever, and not feel that he must live and continue to live forever. Therefore, in order to restore to men such as I have described a belief in immortality, we must restore to them a true conception of God. This is, this ought to be, the main work of the preachers and teachers of this time. For as long as the morality of the pulpit hangs behind the morality of religious-minded men, those religious-minded men will be infidels.

Again, another reason for the prevalent disbelief in immortality is the selfish theory of religious life. That theory has almost died away among religious teachers, but the reaction against it still continues. We have given it up, but it is still imputed to us by our infidel opponents.

It is said that we are to do good, in order to be rewarded; and to avoid evil, lest we should be punished. In this doctrine, badly stated as it has been, there is nothing which appeals to the nobler feelings of man. Selfish gratification and selfish fear are alone addressed. It is a direct appeal to that part of our being which is the meanest, as if that were the part which could most readily accept religion. It connects us to God by bonds of self-interest, as a servant to a patron, not by bonds of love, as a child to a father.

Against this theory many rose in revolt, declaring that according to it the desire of immortal life was a selfish desire, and proposing, as an escape from this selfishness, that men should live a noble life without hopes for the future. They set this forth as the highest form of self-sacrifice. "Live," they said, "doing good, without hope

of reward, only for the sake of good; hating and fighting with evil, because evil is degradation, not because it is punished. You cannot do this, if you accept the Christian doctrine of immortal life. For it nourishes selfishness. It locks a man up in care for his own safety. On the highest religious grounds, we deny the doctrine of immortality as prejudicial to a noble and pious life."

And, if that were really the Christian doctrine, they would do well in denying it, and we might be driven to accept their fine-sounding theory of self-sacrifice.

But we meet it, first, by a blunt contradiction of the false representation of Christianity, from which it has sprung as a reaction. Christianity says precisely what these men say, only not in so abstract a manner. It asks us to do good, not for the sake of abstract good, but for the sake of being like to God, the personal goodness. That is not a selfish doctrine, nor does it lead to selfishness. It urges us to avoid evil, lest we should become unlike God, in whose image we are, and whose temple we become. That is not a selfish motive. It takes us out of self, and makes our life consist in living in God, and, because he lives in all the race, in living through him in the interests and lives of all our brother-men. That is not a selfish doctrine. Its reward is not a selfish reward: it is the reward of being made unselfish, because made like to God. "Your reward," said Christ, "shall be great, for ye shall be the children of your Father"; that is, resembling your Father in character.

Nor does Christianity appeal to fear of punishment, but to the feeling of love. It does not say menacingly, "Thou shalt not kill, or steal, or be an idolater": it says, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy



neighbor as thyself," for then, since thou lovest, thou canst not injure thy neighbor, or sin against God. It rejects fear, as having torment, as belonging to a spirit of bondage, not a spirit of life. It appeals throughout to self-sacrifice, self-devotion. It asks us to live by all that is noblest in us, to walk worthy of our high vocation,—likeness to Christ, who died for men. It does not proclaim the selfish doctrine on which this denial of immortality is founded.

But it is plain that it does declare rewards and punishments; and an objector may say that, even on the supposition that Christianity does not really appeal to the selfish feeling, yet the introduction of the element of rewards has in itself a tendency to produce selfish feeling.

Certainly, we answer, if the rewards are material, if they belong in any way to the selfish part of our nature. But if they have nothing to do with that, but with that part of our being which lives by the denial of self and the practice of self-devotion, if they are purely spiritual rewards, to long after them is not selfish, but the high duty of the soul. God says, "Do good, and you are rewarded." How? By an increased power of doing good. Is it selfish to desire that? God says, "Love me, love your brother-men with all your heart, and you shall be rewarded." How? By deeper capability of loving. Is it selfish to desire that? The true statement of the doctrine of rewards at once dissipates this absurd accusation of selfishness.

To look forward to this increase of the spiritual life, to this daily growth of unselfishness, and to live and act in the hope of that and for its sake,—it is ridiculous to call that a selfish theory. To do good, and to think of

the reward of being loved by God and of becoming more like to God, is no more a selfish life than to spend one's whole life for one's country, and to rejoice in the idea of being loved by one's country, and becoming more worthy of her love, is selfish for the high-hearted soldier. A life of love, lived in the hope of the reward of becoming more capable of love, does not encourage in the heart a single germ of selfishness.

And as to immortal life itself, if you choose to separate it for a moment from these spiritual qualities of love and purity and truth (which in us are immortal life), the desire of life, keener, purer, more abounding, cannot be selfish; for it is a natural appetite of the human spirit.

Now, the lawful gratification of appetite is not selfish. No one is so absurd as to say that the desire of food or drink when we are hungry or thirsty, for the sake of relieving these appetites, is a selfish desire. No one says that the desire of knowledge for the sake of knowing is a selfish desire. It is a noble appetite of the intellect. Yet here, when we get into the realm of the spirit of man, we are told that the desire of immortal life for the sake of life, and that acting for the purpose of being a partaker of that life, is selfish, and encourages selfishness. It is a greater absurdity than the others. Desire of life is the most natural appetite of the spirit, and we are in desperate peril of becoming truly selfish when we crush it, or caricature it, or attempt to live without it.

Indeed, that is often the result. I do not speak now of those who replace the doctrine of personal immortality by the mystical and unpractical notion of an immortality in the race, for these at least allow of the

existence of a longing and passion for immortality, of which they are bound to take notice; nor of those who frankly, on scientific grounds, avow that they do not believe in the existence of a spirit in man apart from his mortal frame, but of those who quietly, on the fantastic ground of the selfishness of this passion, deprive the race of one of the mighty hopes which make us men.

On the whole, mankind resents this, and resents it justly. It separates itself from these men who have separated themselves from the common longing. They feel their isolation, and retire from the world. Or they become angry with the world, and mock and scorn its aspirations. Or they seclude themselves and their theory in Pharisaic dignity, and thank Fate that they are not as other men are, blinded by superstition, but seated aloft in the clear light of unapproachable self-sacrifice, the martyrs of a grand idea.

The end of it all is that they become as self-involved as the Simeon Stylites of the poet, as self-righteous, and as self-conceited. Aiming at the utter denial of self, they arrive at the utter assertion of self.

And this result follows, because the self-sacrifice put forward by these theorists is not self-sacrifice at all, but the immolation of the best and most aspiring part of our nature. They give up what is good, and call it self-sacrifice. It is an inversion of the truth, for self-sacrifice is surrendering what is wrong, or pleasurable, for the sake of good to others. There are certain necessary elements in an act of true self-sacrifice. It must be in itself a moral act, and distinctly felt as such by the actor, else one throws the halo of self-surrender over evil: it must not be merely instinctive, but done with a rational

belief that it will produce good ; and the doer of it must not give up or weaken any element in his nature, the existence and strong existence of which, even in a single individual, is of importance for the progress of the race. It is *not* self-sacrifice to crucify a high desire for the sake of attaining an ideal. It is not self-sacrifice to give up what is true for the sake of being more true. That is as absurd as giving up one friend for the sake of being a more perfect friend to another. You do not gain, but lose so much of power of friendship. And those who surrender the hope of immortal life, for the sake of being freed from all thought of self, do not gain the self-sacrificing heart: they only take away one of the motive-powers of self-sacrifice.

On the whole, we want clearer notions of self-sacrifice. There are some things we have no right to give up. It is not self-sacrifice to surrender our conscience, though we might save a whole nation by doing so. It is not self-sacrifice to be false to our own soul, for the sake of those we love, as the martyr would have been, had he worshipped Jupiter, because his father and mother wept at his feet, and were left to ruin by his death. It is not self-sacrifice to commit suicide, as in some novels, for the sake of the happiness of others. It is not self-sacrifice to marry one who loves you, because you do not wish him or her to suffer, when you do not love in return: it is self-destruction. It is not self-sacrifice to cast aside immortality, that it may not vitiate by a taint of self your doing good. It is spiritual suicide,—nay, more, there is a hidden selfishness in it; for he who does this is endeavoring to secure his own ideal at the expense of the race of men whom he deprives of the hope which

more than all else has cheered and strengthened them in the battle against evil. It is selfish to wilfully shut our eyes to this, that we may indulge a fancy of our own.

For the sake of right reason, if not for the sake of God, do not let yourself be tricked out of your belief in immortality by a subtile seeming good, by an appeal to a false idea of self-sacrifice. First cast aside the theology which has given rise to this twisted notion of self-sacrifice, and then with a clear judgment you will recognize that the true self-sacrifice is not incompatible with the reward of that immortal life which is in itself nothing less than the life of self-sacrifice. Your smile will then be a quiet smile, when men tell you to give up longing for immortality because it is a selfish ground of action. What, you will say, is it selfish to hope to be forever unselfish? Is it selfish to desire to be at one with the life of Him who finds his life in giving himself away? Is it selfish to aspire to that fuller life which is found in living in the lives of others by watchful love of them? These are my rewards, and every one of them ministers to and secures unselfishness.

Lastly, there is another reason for the denial of immortality, which arises from theological teaching. It is the extremely dull and limited notions of the future life. We have too much transferred to our northern Christianity and our active existence of thought the Oriental conceptions of heaven drawn from the book of the Revelation. We have taken them literally instead of endeavoring to win the spiritual thoughts of which these descriptions are but the form. And, literally taken, they are wholly unsuitable to our Teutonic nature. They make the future life seem to our minds a lazy dreamy existence, in which all that is quickest and most vital in

us would stagnate, in which all that makes life interesting, dramatic, active, would perish. It is not needless to notice this. For it is astonishing how, even among men who should have known better, the early childish conceptions of heaven remain as realities. I have met active-minded working-people and cultivated men who looked forward with dislike to death, because they dreaded the dulness of the next world. Till we have a higher, more human conception of the future life than that usually given, we shall not restore to society a joyful belief in immortality. Our theology wants a picture of the world to come, fitted to meet a larger and a worthier ideal of humanity. If we wish to awake interest in the future life, we must add to the merely spiritual ideas of uncultivated teachers others which will minister food to the imagination, the intellect, the social, and national instincts of man; nay, more, if we believe in the resurrection of the body, others which minister to the delight of the purified senses.

We need only go back to the revelation of Christ to gain the true ground of this wider conception. He revealed God as each man's Father. Now, the highest work of a father is education, and the end of God's education of man is the finished and harmonious development of *all* his powers. If in the future life our intellect or imagination is left undeveloped, it is not education, and we cannot conceive of a perfect fatherhood. If all our powers have not there their work and their opportunities of expansion, the full idea of fatherhood is lost. If any of our true work here on earth is fruitless work, and does not enable us to produce tenfold results in a future life, no matter what that work may be, work of the artist, historian, politician, merchant, then the true

conception of education, and therefore of God's fatherhood, is lost.

No, brethren, we rest on this: "I go to prepare a place for you." A place is prepared for each one of us; a place fitted to our distinct character; a separate work fitted to develop that character into perfection, and in the doing of which we shall have the continual delight of feeling that we are growing,—a place not only for us, but for all our peculiar powers. Our ideals shall become more beautiful, and minister continually to fresh aspiration, so that stagnation will be impossible. Feelings for which we found no food here shall there be satisfied with work, and exercised by action into exquisite perfection. Faint possibilities of our nature, which came and went before us here like swallows on the wing, shall there be grasped and made realities. The outlines of life shall be filled up, the rough statue of life shall be finished. We shall be not only spiritual men, but men complete in Christ, the perfect flower of humanity.

And this shall be in a father's home, where all the dearest dreams of home-life shall find their happy fulfilment; in a perfect society, where all the charming interchange of thought, and giving and receiving of each other's good, which make our best happiness on earth, shall be easier, freer, purer, more intimate, more spiritual, more intellectual; and, lastly, in a perfect polity, "fellow-citizens with the saints," where all the interests of large national life shall find room and opportunities for development; and, binding all together, the omnipresent Spirit of love, goodness, truth, and life, whom we call God, and whom we know in Jesus Christ, shall abide in us, and we in him, "for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him."

## IMMORTALITY.—II.

1871.

“For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.”—LUKE XX., 38.

It is remarkable that the theological questions which are now most widely spoken of are no longer those which presuppose a general confession of Christianity, but other and deeper questions altogether,—questions the very discussion of which shows how strongly the foundations of the religious world are moved. It is now frequently asked whether there be a God or not, whether immortality be not a mere idol of the imagination. It is plain, when society has got down to these root questions, that modern theology in its past form has no longer the power to do its work, otherwise these things would be axioms. It is plain that, if Christianity is to keep its ground, it must go through a revolution, and present itself in a new form to the minds of men.

It is the characteristic excellence of Christianity that it is able to do this. For, with regard to his own religion, the saying of Christ remains forever true, that saying which declares the continued progress of revelation, —“I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.”



But when the time draws near for the growth of Christian thought around a new idea, and for the regeneration of Christian practice by the life which flows from the fresh thought, the change is heralded by the appearance, sometimes in infidel teaching, sometimes in isolated religious teachers, of scattered and disconnected truths, which do not naturally belong to the old form of religion, or which are set up in opposition to it. Being half-truths or isolated truths, they point forward to a complete form which shall supplement and include them. At the present day, many of the new truths, or rather of the extensions of the old truths, which Christianity will have to absorb, are to be found in infidel teaching, combined with a rejection of immortality and of the being of a God. We shall search for those truths to-day, and try to show that without the doctrine of immortality they have no lasting value, but that in union with it they are of real importance, and ought to be claimed for Christianity.

But first let us examine for a moment what is taking place at present with regard to Christian and infidel teaching.

During the time when an old form of Christian thought is slowly passing away, having exhausted all it had to give, it repeats again and again with the garrulity of old age the phrases which in its youth were the expressions of living thought and feeling. They fitted then the wants of men, and they were the means by which religious life advanced and religious truth developed. But, being naturally cast into a fixed intellectual system, they remained behind the movement they began: they made men grow, but men outgrew them, for

systems become old, but mankind is always young. It follows then, almost of necessity, that, when a certain point in this progress is reached, there will be a strong reaction against the old form of Christianity, and the reaction will contain the assertion of that which is wanting in the dying phase, and a protest against its weakness. Both the assertion and the protest will often be combined with infidel teaching; for there will be many who, seeing these garments of Christianity rotting away, and hearing them declared to be Christianity itself, will believe the declaration, and attack not only the garments, but the living spirit itself which is waiting to be re clothed. The infidel teaching on religious subjects will then consist of two parts, a negative and a positive part. The negative will deny or ignore all Christian truth as then taught: the positive will assert some ideas necessary for the present time, and answering to some of its religious wants. It is the business of Christian teachers, while setting aside the negations, to claim as their own those positive ideas which, though developed in a foreign soil, are yet derived from Christian seeds. They will say, "We have learned from our enemies: they have told us what the age desires. In answer to that desire, they have unwittingly fallen back upon Christian ideas and expanded them, led unconsciously thereto by the ever-working spirit of God. Those expansions are ours: we did not see them before, but we claim them now." If we do that, the infidelity of the infidel — that is, his negations — will slowly share the fate of all negations; and the scattered truths he teaches, taken into Christianity, find in it their vital union with all its past, and form stepping-stones for its future growth.

This is the general sketch of the movement in which we are now involved. We are at that point in it in which we are beginning to recognize that the infidel is teaching a few truths which naturally belong to Christianity. But we have not yet fully assimilated those truths, or established their connection with those we possess. Not till that is done will our wider form of Christian thought be completed.

Let us take the two main forms of infidelity which prevail,—secularism and Comtism,—the first widely spread among the working-classes; the second — the religion of positivism, to call it by its other name — held by a small number of the cultivated class.

Both of these hold in them ideas which ought to be ours. It is said that these ideas are foreign to Christianity. On the contrary, I believe that they are the children of Christianity born in an alien land, and moreover that they fit more harmoniously into the Christian system than into the system with which they are now united.

Of the coarse, brutal secularism, which does nothing but deny and bluster, I have nothing to say; but there is another form of it, which does not so much deny as say: "We do not know: there may be another life to come, there may be a God, but we cannot prove these things. They are wrapped in mystery: they leave us in the mystery. God, if there be a God, gives no answer to us. All the feelings which we are asked to feel about him, all the hopes and fears which cluster round the doctrine of immortality, only hinder our practical work, make us think of ourselves, and not of our duty: nay, more, they do harm; for more suffering and

evil have come upon the race, more cruelty and more hindrances to progress have arisen from these notions than from any others. We will put them utterly aside, and act by faith in other ideas."

This is their denial, and even from this we may learn much. For the God the conscientious secularist denies is the God of whom we spoke last Sunday,—a God of arbitrary will, who makes salvation depend on assent to certain systems of theology, and men responsible for sins committed before they were born; who dooms the greater part of the race to eternal wickedness. And the immortality he does not care for is an immortality based on the selfish doctrine of which we also spoke, which by working on the fears and greed of men produces persecution in public and continual brooding on self in private; above all, which destroys unconscious aspiration. Looking at this, we learn our faults. We are driven back to that conception of a Father which Christ revealed. We are taught to preach a loftier view of the nature of immortal life. We turn and say to the secularist, "The God whom you reject, we reject: the immortality you deny, we deny also."

But we may learn much more from what he asserts as his religion. He believes that nature contains all things necessary for the guidance of mankind; that duty consists in a steadfast pursuit, according to the laws of nature, of results tending to the happiness of the race; and that in doing that duty he becomes happy. His God is duty, his Bible is nature, his heaven is in the happiness of man and the progress of mankind to perfection. His sin is in violating natural laws, because such a violation is sure to bring evil on men.

The two main ideas running through this we ought to learn to make more prominent in Christianity, the idea that man has a higher duty to mankind than to himself, the idea of the progress of the race to perfection. The first is distinctly contained in the whole spirit of the life of Christ, the second in the Christian conception of God's Fatherhood. But there is no doubt that our Christianity has not sufficiently dwelt on these thoughts, and that the Christianity of the future must absorb them. We accept then, with thankfulness, this teaching from without; but we say that to fulfil it in action, and to bring it home to the hearts and lives of men, there must be added to it the Christian ideas of God and of immortality. The absence of these deprives the secularist of any certain ground for that reverence for human nature and for that faith in ultimate perfection without which there can be no *joyous* self-sacrifice for man, no unflinching work for his progress. Their absence deprives him of the mighty impulse which arises from a profound love for an all-loving person, and replaces it by the weaker impulse which is born of love to an abstraction called duty, or to a "humanity" which is always disappointing the love which is lavished on it, till our love, feeding on imperfection, becomes itself enfeebled or corrupt. Their absence deprives him of the idea which more than all others makes a religious society coherent, that all its members are held together by the indwelling in each, and in the whole, of one personal spirit of good; of the idea which makes work for human progress persistent, that all work done here is carried to perfection in a kindlier world, not only in the everlasting life of each worker, but in the mighty whole of a human

race destined to slowly form itself, through the undying labor of each and all in God, into the full-grown man. And, finally, their absence deprives him of any large power of appeal to those deep-seated feelings of awe, mystery, and adoration, which are drawn out in men by the idea of God; and which are, when linked to the inspiration which flows from the love of a perfect man, the source of that enthusiasm which supports and continues a religion.

Practically, then, we should expect *a priori* that secularism, on account of its negation of God and immortality, could not float its noble ideas. And this is really the fact: it has had many followers, but the greater number do not remain in it; they change out of it into many Christian sects, or they pass from entire unbelief into credulity. Some are the victims of remote and strange phases of fanaticism: others, like Robert Owen, end in the opposite extreme of "spiritualism."

Nor have the societies or sects of secularism any coherence: none of them can keep up a permanent organization, and their quarrels are as bitter as they say that those of Christians are. The very best among them pass through life doing their duty to the last, but in a kind of mournful hopelessness, their heart unsatisfied, though their intellect may be at rest; for there is, deep down in their minds, the painful suspicion that clinging to negations may after all be itself as blind a superstition as any of those which they attack.

To sum up all, there are a few ideas in secularism which owe their origin to the insensible growth of the ideas of Christ among men. These ideas are in advance of the accepted Christianity of this day, but they are

inoperative in secularism. When we take them into connection with the belief in God and immortality, they will become operative, but they will modify the present form of Christianity.

Secondly, we consider the religion of positivism in the same light. It maintains, though in a different and more cultured form, the same views on these points as secularism. But it avoids negations for the most part, and confines itself to saying that Christianity has nothing more to give to man; that its good influence is exhausted for the western nations. In it, the Christian doctrine of God and immortality entirely disappears. In spite of this, and far more than secularism, it has drunk deep of the spirit of Christianity: most of its doctrines may be directly inferred from the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, and in fact are unconsciously derived from it. Only it is to be said that the accredited Christianity of the day has not yet arrived at these expansions of Christian ideas, that, so far, the followers of Comte's religion are in front of us, and that we ought, in spite of the curious and infidel surrounding of these new thoughts, to claim them as by right our own and embody them in Christianity.

The future Christianity will have to take into itself such doctrines as social and international self-sacrifice, which is a direct and logical expansion of the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice. It is surprising, if anything is surprising, that we have not done this already; that in our pulpits we only speak of the self-sacrifice of one person for another, and almost nothing of the duty of the citizen to sacrifice himself for his parish, for social

ends, for the State; of the duty of nations to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the community of nations, and of the duty of the community of nations to sacrifice much in the present for the sake of the future welfare of the whole race. Nor must we leave out other positivist doctrines, such as the necessity of giving to each of the human faculties their appropriate work in connection with a large idea of religion, a doctrine contained, as I think, in Saint Paul's view of the relation of gifts and of distinct characters to the growth of the race in God, and of the working\* of these differing gifts by a divine spirit for that purpose; nor yet that other doctrine of the sanctification of all human effort to the good of man, so that social feeling may be victorious over self-love, which is in fact the redeclaration, in a wider form than we declare it, of the whole aim and spirit of Christ's life; nor yet that other doctrine of the union of science, art, and morality into an harmonious whole, under the regenerating influence of the worship of humanity,—a conception which we shall take, and only change by replacing the worship of humanity by the worship of the Christ as the representative and concentration into an ideal man of the whole race as it is in God; nor yet, finally, that other idea of the race as one great Being ever living and moving on by the service of each to the use of the whole, which is, in truth, the idea of the race as "the full-grown man" laid down by Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians, adding, however, to this last thought that which gives it reality and concrete form,—the belief in One who is the federal

\*"All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."



Head of this great Being, because he is himself in perfection that which the race is as yet imperfectly. These are the doctrines which we gladly receive as expansions of our Christianity, and by which we modify our present form of it.

But we shall absorb them, retaining that which the religion of positivism leaves out as unnecessary, but without which, as we think, these new ideas die of starvation,—the belief in the Being of a loving Father, and in the endless life of each and all. That there does exist in man the desire of adoring an all-embracing Being, and the desire of immortality, positivism, unlike secularism, is too wise to deny; and it attempts to provide for these two passions in its religion. Instead of God, it presents us with humanity conceived of as a vast organism composed of all men and women who have lived for the sake of mankind. This is the Being we are to worship, and of whom we ourselves are part: we devote our thoughts to the knowledge of her, our afflictions to her love, our actions to her service. To become, in the thoughts of men, at one with this Being whose life renews itself throughout all time, and to be commemorated and loved by men to come, to have our immortality in the continued existence and affection of the race,—this is the reward and this the eternal life which this religion offers to our acceptance.

Well, if such an object of worship and such an immortality satisfy the passions and longings, the existence of which the positivist confesses in others, it will be very strange. He allows that they do not satisfy men as at present constituted, that the old feelings must be driven out before the new gospel be received. But we are told

that education from the positivist point of view will transfer the feelings now expended on God to this new Being, and that the aspirations which now cluster round immortality will have their satisfaction in the delight of having our work interwoven with the progress of mankind. Against these assertions, one can only appeal to time for a full reply. But it does seem true that men, if they worship, wish to worship what is perfect and absolute, and that the worship of an imperfect and growing humanity cannot ever satisfy their wish. And it also seems true that men, if they worship, wish to worship one whom they can distinctly conceive as a person in relation with themselves, and in whom, as the ideal Man, each man can love his race. The Great-Being of the Comtist does not realize this wish. The organism of which he speaks is not distinct to thought, is not a person, is not capable of entering into separate relations of affection with individuals. The whole thing, while professing to be specially human, seems to me specially inhuman. Nor will men, I think, be satisfied to live only in the memory of those to come, and to exchange the promise of immortal life (growing fuller, wiser, more intense in work and enjoyment of growth, more individual and yet less liable to self-absorption, every day) for the promise of annihilation, except so far as their influence and acts remain in the continued progress of the race. They will say: "All you promise me I have already in Christianity, and the something more which you do not promise. The past and all its human story is far more living to me than it is to you. I belong in Christ (who has redeemed and is redeeming all men) to all the spirits who have been. I am a part, not of a

‘humanity,’ all the back portions of which are dead, but of a mighty army of living men, who, though called dead to us, are yet united to us in spirit, and doing human work in God, in a world to which I am going. Nor do I only belong to the past and present of mankind: I belong in God, who holds eternity within himself, to all the future of mankind. Those yet unborn are living in him, and therefore bound to me. And all the beings of the human race, on earth and in heaven, are advancing together,—a vast polity, under the education of the Lord and King, whose name is Eternal Love. Till you can bring your conception up to the level of that magnificent conception, we refuse to take it into serious consideration. It is a lower thought, and we cannot change gold against lead.”

We believe, then, in the eternal progress of the race in God, not only in the immortality of individuals, but in the immortality of mankind. It made men fairly object to immortality when it was held to secure to a few continuous union with good, and to the many continuous union with evil. It is to this false and cruel view that we owe the spread and the strength of secularism. But day by day the doctrine of the eternity of evil is being driven into its native night before a higher view of the nature of God, and a nobler belief in him as the undying righteousness. We are beginning to understand what Christ meant when he said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I *must* bring; and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.” It was a “must,” an imperative duty which the Saviour felt; and he spoke in the name of God, who feels the same as a necessity of his relation to us.

The act of creation lays on us a duty. We bring a child into the world, and the absolute imperative of God is on us to feed, educate, and love to the end that to which we have given life. We do our best for the child, but we will suppose that all goes wrong. We expend our love upon him, he rejects it; we punish, and he hardens under punishment and leaves us; we go after him, and he refuses to return; we give him up to himself for a time, and he grows worse, and dies impenitent. But, if we are of a true human nature, we cannot forget him. Our first thought in the other world is our erring son, and if we can,—and I for one do not doubt it,—our one effort in the eternal life will be to find him out and redeem him to our heart by any sacrifice which love can prompt. And, even could love not move us, duty would call us to this righteous quest. We *must* bring our wanderer home.

It is so, I firmly believe, with God and men. By the very act of creation, God has laid upon himself a necessity of redemption. We wander from him, and he punishes us through his spiritual laws; we reap that which we have sown; we fill our belly with the husks which the swine eat. He lets us eat of the fruit of our own devices, the day of retribution comes, and our pleasures turn to gall, our irritated desires become our hell. Lower and lower still we sink, and suffering is hard on us; for impenitent man must touch the abyss of God's chastising tenderness before pride and self be conquered into penitence. But God waits and works: "Them also I must bring," speaks the necessity which flows from his Fatherhood. All through our deepest ruin, God's victorious love is opposed to man's reluctant hatred and

despair, till at last they, being of the finite finite, and of the dead things of the universe dead, are shattered to pieces by persistent love; and the child, come to himself, calls out from the depths of a divine misery, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Far off, his Father sees him, and in triumphant joy receives him: "This my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." It will be thus within eternity, till, in the fulness of charity, there shall be at last one flock and one shepherd. Most tender and most true of images! Contrast it, in its beauty, with the common notion of the future of the race,—that notion which has maddened men into atheism and hatred of immortality,—a small flock on which all the infinite love of the infinite goodness is outpoured, and beyond its fold a howling wilderness of lost and ruined souls, lost and ruined for ever and ever, and rained upon by the eternal fires of the everlasting anger of a vindictive God. It is not so: that is not our God, nor that our heaven, nor that the immortality for which we cry. God must bring all his creatures to himself. "There shall be one flock and one shepherd."

As long as the horror of everlasting punishment, or, as it may be better expressed, of everlasting evil, is preached, secularism will keep alive. Rough-thinking men at this time of the world cannot stand Manichæism; and it is no wonder that they deny God, when one of the main things they are told is that God either keeps up evil forever in his universe, or is unable to put an end to it. Nor is it any wonder that they become unbelievers in Christianity, when a doctrine is linked to Christianity which denies their moral instincts, and makes them look on God as the sovereign tyrant; which forces them to

consider the story of redemption as either a weak effort on the part of an incapable God, or a mockery by him of his creatures on the plea of a love which they see as scornful, and a justice which they declare to be favoritism. I prophesy, as this doctrine perishes, the resurrection of the working-classes from secularism into faith in the Father of men. I foresee a brighter, more joyous, more natural Christianity, in the midst of which faith and hope shall abide, and love which never faileth. Fifty years hence, we shall all believe in the victorious power of goodness, and the test of Orthodoxy shall not be that which I once heard applied to a young clergyman,—“Sir, do you believe in the devil?” It will be this: “Do you believe in God?”

Again, the doctrine of immortality was fairly objected to, when it led men to dwell on their own salvation as the first thing, when it promoted the idea of individualism to the loss of the idea of association. To this tendency of the doctrine, we owe its rejection by the positivist religion; for it injured one of the foremost doctrines of Comte,—that self-love must be systematically subordinated to social and international sacrifice, that all men and nations ought to be bound together as one man.

The tendency against which there has been this reaction is indeed contained in the Christian doctrine: it does dwell on and deepen individuality. But it was a shameful thing when men tore away this element of the doctrine from its brother element, isolated it, and turned it, as a half-truth, into a lie. For the doctrine was united on its other side to the frankest sacrifice of the individual to the whole; nay, it gave men to understand

that, without the largest sacrifice, immortal life could not be attained. "Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it," said Christ; "and whosoever loseth his life, the same shall save it." He himself *was* the Eternal Life, because he died for the whole world of men. "I could wish myself accursed from Christ," said Saint Paul, "for my brethren, my companions' sake." There was no base individualism in that noble speech: to have the spirit which can say it is to have immortal life.

Nor did Christianity in its relation to immortality shut out the element of association. Its original church was chosen from mankind for the purpose of bringing all mankind into it. The heathen world are spoken of as apart from it, but only as *then* apart from it: its object was to unite all nations into one, to bring the wildest and remotest within its realm. No class was left out, no classes existed in its spiritual kingdom: all were children of God, brothers of one another; and this was their immortal life in the spiritual world, that they all lived in and for each other. The images used to describe the Christian idea of the Church were images of association: a temple built of living stones; a human body, whose head was Christ, from whom "the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." That is not the doctrine of each man for himself, but of each for all. The same idea is more fully carried out in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter twelve. And I must here say that these Epistles are not to be taken as addressed to a close sect of believers: they were written

to all the Corinthian Church, and through them to all mankind. Nor were these words spoken to specially holy persons, but to the whole body of men, bad or good, in that Church,—to fanatics, to drunkards who scandalized the Supper of the Lord, to defenders of incest, to men fighting with one another and divided into religious sects, as well as to the righteous. He begins by speaking of the diversities of gifts, and of their use in the progressive education of the whole body, each ministering that which the other wanted. He goes on to say that “all have been baptized into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free”; for there was no separation of nations or classes. The isolation of one from the rest is then condemned, for the body is not one member, but many; nor can any member separate himself from the body, because he is not as another: “For if the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it not therefore of the body?” Nor can any member say that he can live without the life of any other member: “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nay, even those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” Mazzini himself could not now, eighteen hundred years after, ac-



clare more strongly the principle of association. Comte could not assert more largely the doctrine of international interdependence. Of course it may be said that these things were written solely to the Christian Church. That I deny, if the Christian Church is taken to mean any isolated body at any time in history. They were written to describe the ideal of the Christian Church, and that ideal includes all mankind. They describe what ought to be the relation of nations to nations, of nations to tribes of every type and color, of men to men all over the world. And they describe what will be in the fulness of time, when the body of mankind, past, present, and future, shall be wholly finished, and the actual be identical with the ideal Man.

It is this mighty conception which we ought to link to our thought of immortality. Without it, the desire of eternal life becomes selfish and swiftly falls to evil: with it, it grows into the grandest thought which a man can have on earth; with it, immortality binds itself up with all the noblest speculations of patriot, philosopher, and lover of man, with all the ideas of our time which have regard to a universal and united mankind, giving to them new strength and coherence, a fresher hope, an unshamed faith; and leading them beyond the silence and inaction of the tomb, where positivist and secularist bury forever the mighty drama of the past of men, bids them look forward with a morning light in their eyes to the endless beauty and unfailing work of a mankind so loved, so deeply loved by us, that, when for a moment the thought crosses our brain that it could die and make no sign, something seems to break within our heart.

## IMMORTALITY.—III.\*

1871.

“For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.”—LUKE XX., 38.

It has been said by the author of the *History of Rationalism* that “the discoveries of modern science form a habit of mind which is carried far beyond the limits of physics.”

Nowhere is this more true than in the scornful doubt with which some natural philosophers meet the belief in immortality, or in the bold denial which they give it. It is not long ago since I heard a geologist say, “As a body, we have given up the belief in immortality.” It may be worth while to-day to suggest, first, a cause for this wide-spread surrender of an old belief among the men who pursue physical science; secondly, to look into the reason they give for their denial, and to see if that reason be reasonable; and, thirdly, to suggest a proof of the doctrine.

1. The cause I believe to be, in the case of many men of science, an unequal development of their nature; in other words, a want of uniform culture. They give up

\* I am indebted to Fichte's *Location of Man* for a portion of the argument in this sermon, from our consciousness of will and its results to the existence of a “self-active Reason and a living Will.”

their whole life and all its energy to the study of physical phenomena. In these phenomena, they find nothing spiritual. The strata of an ocean-bed tell them nothing, in their vast succession of life and death, of the eternal continuance of the individual. The combinations of the elements do not speak of the union of the soul with the Eternal Soul of God, and in the convolutions of the brain and the interweaving of the nerves they will not discover faith or love or reverence; or, not being able to deny their existence, they say that they dissolve with the nerve matter, of which they are modes of motion. Not only do they study nothing but these things, but they put aside any suggestions of spiritual feeling which may come to them in their work, as disturbing elements, as dimming the "dry light" in which they toil. It is no wonder, then, that their spiritual faculty becomes dwarfed or paralyzed, till, not finding its motions in themselves, they are ready to deny their existence elsewhere. On the other hand, their peculiar habit of mind becomes abnormally developed, and even their imagination is only used in one direction. They are like men who should sit all their life in a chair and exercise their arms violently. Their arms become immensely strong, their legs so feeble that they cannot walk. One would not be surprised to hear these persons say, "On the whole, as a body, we have given up any belief in walking being either pleasant or intended for the human race." The answer is, "You are no judge till you have recovered the use of your legs."

Nor is one in the least surprised by a similar assertion on the part of some natural philosophers with regard to immortality. Given the previous habit of mind and

work, what else but unbelief could ensue? Only we can scarcely refrain a smile when the assertion is made with a certain Pharisaic air, "Nature, I thank thee, I am not led away by superstition or feeling, even as these Christians"; and the only possible answer is a smile, such as the natural philosopher would greet a religious man with, who had as much neglected his intellect and its exercise as the denier of immortality has neglected his spirit and its exercise, and who should say, as if it settled the whole question, "On the whole, we have ceased to believe in the truth of the theory of gravitation."

But, again, as there are some who have lost the use of the religious powers through neglect of them, so there are others in whom the religious powers seem wholly wanting. They seem to be born with a radical defect in their nature, and they can no more see the truth or the necessity of immortality than some who are color blind can see the beauty or the use of color. None are more upright than this class of scientific men: they love truth, and pursue after it in physics without one backward step. But they cannot understand the things of the spirit, for these are naturally foolishness to them.

I can see the use, almost the necessity, of this. Nature has to be ruthlessly examined, forced step by step to yield her secrets. The good of the race demands that a certain amount of this work should be done by men who are not disturbed by the speculations or the passions of the spirit; and, though there are many who unite with ease the realms of faith and of experiment under one government, yet there are a few whose work is needed in physics, and who would do but little therein, if they were called on to contend also in the world of the

spirit. These, I think, are so far sacrificed in this life for the good of the whole; allowed to remain imperfect men that they may do their own special work in a perfect manner. And we accept their work with gratitude, and say to ourselves when we regret their want, "God has plenty of time to finish the education of his laborers: that which is deficient here will be added hereafter." But at the same time, while we recognize the excellent work of these philosophers in their own sphere, we ask of them not to force upon us the results of their blindness in another region. If a man cannot see red, we do not let him impose on us the statement that red is not to be seen, even though he may be a perfect musician. If a man cannot conceive immortality, we do not let him impose on us the statement that immortality is a vain dream, even though he may be a natural philosopher of the first rank. We are bound to say to the one, As a musician, we accept your criticisms: as a judge of color, you are of no value; and to the other, As a natural philosopher, we bow to your conclusions: as a judge of the truth or falsehood of immortality, your opinion is worthless.

Again, in no way is the habit of mind of which we are speaking carried further than in the saying of some physiologist,—that all thought and feeling are inseparably bound up with physical form, with nervous centres and the rest; that form makes mind, and therefore that mind, feeling, memory, and the desires, the pain, and the joy of that which we call the spirit, perish with the dissolution of the machine of which they are part. I have just as good a right to start from the other side, and to say that thought makes form: nay, I have even more

right; for, by a strict process of reasoning, one may fairly arrive at the statement that our own frame and the whole material universe is the product of our own thought. I do not say that I *know* this, nor assert that mind makes form, but it is just as probable as, and even more probable than, the opposite assertion. Both statements are incapable of sufficient proof. Professor Huxley says that, "when men begin to talk about there being nothing else in the universe but matter and force and necessary laws, he declines to follow them"; and equally, when men say that there is nothing else in the universe but thought or will or consciousness, we should decline to follow them. The latter is far more possible than the other: I am myself inclined to believe it, but I do not know it. All we know with relation to our body and mind is that certain physical changes take place simultaneously with every thought and feeling. But no knowledge of the structure of the brain or nerves can show us the connecting link between the two, or enable us to say that physical motion is thought or thought physical motion. "The passage from the physics of the brain," says Dr. Tyndall, "to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought and the definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of it, which could enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one phenomenon to the other. They appear together, we know not why." There is no proof, then, that consciousness is inseparably connected with the physical frame, and therefore no proof that it perishes with it. The truth, then, of the doctrine of immortality remains, con-

sidered from the intellectual point of view, an open question; and to daringly assert that it is untrue is ridiculous in the mouth of a sensible man.

I may say here, in a parenthesis, that Christianity by no means denies that thought and form in man are closely connected one with the other. On the contrary, the doctrine of the resurrection seems to imply that the human consciousness needs form in order to be conscious of itself, for it allots a body to the soul. It does not say, as some have vainly fabled, that the body we place in the earth, and whose elements passed into the earth, is raised again: it does say that God gives a spiritual body to the soul, whatever that may mean. It throws the matter on the omnipotence of God; and, if we believe in God at all, that a new form should knit itself to a mind and spirit which have become personal through the memories and work of a human life is no more incredible than that they should have been originally knit together.

Moreover, should it turn out to be true that there is nothing actually existing but thought, and that our present bodies are only the product of our power of presenting to ourselves our own conceptions, then, supposing that our personal order of thought continues after that which we call death, it will weave out of its consciousness, under changed conditions, a new vehicle for itself, and forever appear to itself and others to be connected with form.

But to return to our argument. The natural philosopher who may allow the possibility of immortality will at the same time refuse to consider it as a practical question, because, before any intellectual proof can be given

of it, a spiritual world must be assumed; and he refuses to believe without proof in the existence of such a world. He takes nothing for granted: he will have faith in nothing which cannot be proved to the satisfaction of the understanding.

Now, I want to try and give some reply to this. I will not assume, as will be seen, a spiritual world. I will only begin with the assumption of the reality of a command, outside of our thought, which bids us do what is right, and supposes that we know what is right. But even this is an act of faith, and to that our natural philosopher objects in any shape.

Well, it seems to me that precisely the same difficulty which he alleges against the consideration of immortality may be alleged against himself. He, too, must begin with an act of faith, and without that beginning he can know nothing at all about the physical world. That he does know something about it is plain. How did he win that knowledge? He would say, By deductive and inductive reasoning, accompanied by experiment. I do not contradict him; but I say that he has left out one of the factors of the answer, and a very important one: he has left out the act of faith with which he started. He willed, by an impulse within himself, for which his educated reason can give no proof, to believe in the existence of a physical world. And without that act of faith he could, by any and every process of reasoning, have only arrived at the knowledge that he knew nothing at all. It is not difficult to make this clear. By the creation of theories which he afterwards proved true through their explanation of all the phenomena within their several spheres, by long experimental arguments



conducted from fact to fact, he at last arrived, step after step, at the conception of one thing outside himself by which all things are, and of which all things are forms, and he calls this Force, — the constant force of the universe. And, having thus reduced all things to one expression, he may think that he knows all things, or is in the sure way of knowing them. I do not say that he is not; but I do say that he assumes without proof, and by faith, that there is this thing outside of his thought, this Force, which *is* the physical universe. For, without assuming that, what happens as he goes on thinking? He will go back, and say to himself: “Just as I questioned whether red or blue had any real existence, and found that they had none, being only the result produced in my brain by sensations caused in the eye by waves of light of different lengths, and just as when I asked myself whether light had any real existence as light, and found on inquiry that it was only a mode of motion, a form of force, which was light to me because my eye had certain atomic arrangements, but which might be electricity to me, if the atoms of my eye were differently arranged: so now I ask whether force itself has any real existence apart from my thought of it, and therefore whether there be a physical universe at all. And, led by reasoning alone, I am forced to say that it has not, that there is nothing which I have not first thought, that I can have no thought without having first thought it. By reasoning alone, I come to the conclusion that the whole physical universe is but a picture which my own thought presents to itself, and therefore that I know nothing about it as it really is, *if it is*; for, even with regard to my own thought, I cannot say whether I really

think or only think that I think. I have reached a point at which all certainty disappears. I only know that I know nothing."

But when we have arrived at this point, and absolutely discredited all existence, even our own,—for the argument may be pushed to that,—the absurdity of the conclusion tells us that there is something wrong in our method of reasoning, that some factor has been left out.

Our conclusion is that we know nothing; and the understanding, working alone, brings us to that. But one man will say, "The fact is that I do know something about the world of nature." "Well," I reply, "look back, and you will find that you either began with an act of faith in the reality of the physical universe, or that you put in that act of faith in the course of your argument." To another, who allows that his reasoning has led him to the conclusion that he can say nothing certain about physical existence, we reply: "No, you never can know, till you have resolved to add the factor of faith in an outward world to your argument."

We must begin our reasoning by an act of faith in the existence of a physical world, real at least to us, practically independent of us; and it is this act of faith which gives consistence to the whole fabric of our physical knowledge, makes it useful, keeps up our work, and saves us from yielding to the conclusion to which we are driven by the work of the reasoning faculty alone. It is the foundation-stone on which the whole of natural science is built.

An unknown impulse in our constitution, the origin of which we cannot trace, determines our will—in spite of our educated reason—to believe in a physical world.

And that is as much and as absolute an act of faith as that whereby we believe in God or in the reality of duty,—two things which are one, and which together infer immortality. When the man of science, then, says to me, “I refuse to consider immortality, it sets out with an act of faith,” I reply, “You might as well refuse to consider the physical motions of the universe; for to do so demands that you should first believe in a physical universe, a belief for which you can give no proof at all, till you have believed it.”

And now to apply this to the matter in hand, to the question of the proof of immortality. Taking the understanding alone as our guide, and believing nothing which cannot be made plain to reasoning, we arrive in the spiritual region at a conclusion similar to that which we found in the region of physics,—at a knowledge only that we know nothing of duty, immortality, or God. We ask and ask again; and the more we ask, the more sceptical we become. This or that may be or may not be. I know nothing at all. And this is misery to an earnest man.

But as we find that the natural philosopher begins by willing to believe that there is a physical world to him, so now, in this other region, we ask ourselves whether there is nothing in us which claims our faith, and for which we can bring no proof. Is there anything in our consciousness which is independent of our thought? And, as we listen, we hear a voice which says, “You were not born only to know, but far more to act; and not to know and through knowledge to act, but to act, and through action to know.” We have an impulse to moral activity, which we feel is one with our

existence; and this impulse seems to be originally beyond all knowledge, to transcend the realm of the understanding, to be, not anything we think, but the ground of all our thinking. And we seem to know immediately and without any proof — by a different kind of knowledge, therefore, than that which we gain from reasoning — that we must obey this impulse, or fall into nothingness. If we take up our old habit and submit this inner voice to the questions of the understanding, we are forced to ask if we really feel this impulse or only think we feel it; and speculation suggests that the impulse may be only the thought of a thought which our consciousness presents to us, and that, if we act upon it, we cannot know whether we really act or only seem to ourselves to act. Tenfold darkness of doubt surrounds us then, and our life becomes like a dream within a dream. Therefore, in despair, we make a bold step, and, casting away those inquiries which led us to the abyss of nothingness, we resolve with all our will to believe that this impulse to moral action is absolutely a real impulse, and to obey it as the true calling of our life. We set aside the understanding at this point, and we call faith to our side. Immediately, we know not how, we are convinced that right is a reality, and that we can do what is right, and that we shall find our true and only life in doing it. We are convinced of this through faith; and our faith arises not from a series of proofs offered by the understanding, but from our having freely willed to believe in duty, — that is, from the whole set of our inward character.

And now, having by faith found this clear starting-point, that we are bound to act according to conscience,

what follows? The same voice which tells us that we must act rightly tells us also, and that necessarily, that our actions will have a result in the future; and, as our will and action are conceived of as right, the conception at once arises of a better world, in which our will and acts shall have their due value. We necessarily look forward to and live in a nobler world. Where is, then, this nobler world? The religious infidel may accept so far our argument; but he will say that this world to which we look forward is to be found not in any spiritual world, but in a future human world, when man has subdued the forces of the universe so that they spoil his work no longer; when he has, by the long effort of those who have been faithful to the cause of freedom and right, produced a perfect state in which each shall love his neighbor, and each nation love its neighbor nation as himself. This is the nobler world to which our actions and will aspire, and in it are their results. Neither immortality nor a spiritual world needs here be inferred from the argument.

But, granting that mankind will reach this perfect state, what is to happen then? There will be nothing more to do, nothing to aspire to left, nothing more to know. Will action, then, and aspiration die, and curiosity fail for food? If so, men will cease to be men, mankind will stagnate in its place, or will weep itself to death, for it will have no more worlds to conquer. Such is the necessary result of this theory without the addition of immortal life; and to this miserable end we can quietly look forward, for this we can work with energy and patience! When we have made the race perfect, we have most utterly ruined the race. It seems

an intolerable conclusion, and an absurd one; and there is no way out of it but either the supposition of the annihilation of mankind, which renders our will to do right and the effects we inevitably annex to it ridiculous in our eyes, or the supposition that there is another world where the race goes on under new conditions, to do new work and win new knowledge, where the will to do right has its highest and most sure results.

Moreover, our righteous will has but few results in this world. There are a thousand thoughts which it determines, a thousand feelings it impels, which never pass beyond our inner life. The steady volition toward good of a long life has little result on this earth. Many of the good things we succeed in putting into action miserably fail for want of prudence, or even produce evil in this world. Where, then, are the results of these things? where does the will act? where are the broken lines, the inner life, completed? If nowhere, and plainly it is not here, then half of our being is made up of broken ends of thread.

We are driven therefore to think that the nobler world in which all good action has its own good results, in which our will (determined toward right) serves always a noble purpose, is another and a higher world than this, of which we and all our brother-men are citizens. In this world, our will has power when we will to do right: it sets on foot endless results. In this world, which must be spiritual, because our will is spiritual, we live and move and have our being now, as really, nay, more really, than we live and move in the physical world by our outward acts, and when we die we do not enter a world of which we have had no ex-

perience, but in a more complete manner, as free from earthly limitations, into a world in which we have lived already.

We are forced, then, by feeling that our virtuous will must have results, and by the fact that it has only a small number of results in this world, to believe in a spiritual world in which the will, being itself spiritual, finds its true ends fulfilled. That is the first step in the argument for immortality, after the act of faith of which I spoke has been freely chosen by the will.

The second step carries us on to the truth of Immortality.

When I conceive of my will to do right having *necessary* results in a spiritual world, I conceive of a law as ruling in that world. If the results *must be*, there must be a law by which they are necessary. To that law I am connected by moral obedience; and, because it annexes fixed results to virtuous volition in me and in all men, it is above and beyond our wills. In it all our finite wills are held, and to it they all are subject. But since the world in which this law is, is not the world of sense, but a spiritual world in which will acts, the law of that world cannot be like that which we call a law here, — a mere expression of antecedents and sequences, a mere statement of the way in which things are: it must be a living law; it must be self-active reason; it must be a will.

And it is a Will,—the Will from whom all human wills have flowed, to which all human wills are related, in whom all human wills have being; the only self-existent, the only unchangeable, the only infinite Will, of whom and by whom and through whom are all things,

—God invisible, eternal, absolute, to whom be glory for ever and ever. The voice I hear in my heart, and to which I willed to give obedience, and whose reality I believed at first, I know now was his voice. My will, which determined to obey that voice, was urged thereto by this infinite Will. My will is related to him, and in him must have results in the whole spiritual world which exists in him and by him. And this which is true of me is true of all my fellow-men. As the will of each is contained and sustained by him, and has its own special results in him, he becomes the spiritual bond of union which unites me to all the race: we all together share our life in him. And because we share in his being, and he is eternal and imperishable, we also know, at last, that we are eternal and imperishable, and that, for the certainty of which our soul has longed and cried, is a reality. We are immortal. Death, as we call it, may touch our sensible vesture, but it is only a vesture which decays. Our being goes on in another life; for we live in his life, and our true world is not this world. “We look for a city which hath foundations.” We abide in him and he in us, and he abides forever.

The parallel, in fact, between the two lines of argument, is exact. The natural philosopher having put in, either at the beginning or in the process of his work, a belief in the existence of Force, which is a belief in an outward world, finds that which he was driven to assume confirmed at every step of his inquiry. He cannot understand a number of facts except on the ground that Force is a reality to him; and he leaves aside, as unpractical in his work, the question as to whether it has only



an existence in Thought. His theory of Force explains by far the greater part of natural phenomena, and is contradicted by none. He returns then to his starting-point, and says: "That which I originally believed without proof is true. Force is a real existence."

Precisely in the same way, we prove that the reality of Duty, which we willed to believe, and which, seen as we saw it (not as something developed by the slow action of social circumstances, but as a command independent of our own thought and coming to us from without), necessarily inferred a spiritual world and God and Immortality, is an absolute reality. It and its necessary results, which together form our theory of the Universe of Spirit, solve the greater part of the moral and spiritual problems of life, and are not distinctly contradicted by any.

But it may be said that the analogy is not exact. For though Force or the physical world is proved to have a real existence *to us*, it is not proved to have an independent existence; and some scientific men are in doubt on that question. All Force, they say, may be nothing more than Will,—Will-force. Moreover, though the supposition of its existence explains most of the phenomena we know, that does not necessarily infer that it has any existence independent of Thought. We have no right then, an objector may say, to infer, because our theory of the Universe of Spirit explains the moral and spiritual phenomena of human life and its history, the actual existence of Duty, of a spiritual world, of God, and of Immortality. We can only infer their existence in Thought.

Only their existence in Thought! In what else should

they exist, and what existence can be more absolute? We ask no more. For, taking the ground of those scientific men who think that Force is Will, they think no more than we wish them to think that there is a Will, and therefore a Thought, in whom the Universe is. In thinking thus, they grant God, and the real existence of all things in him. In thinking thus, the physical world is no less a reality to them, but more. The question whether it have independent existence or not does not touch their work, nor will their work on that account be of less moment forever and ever; for the principles of the order of this apparent world will be always the same in any other apparent world, however different from this, for they are fixed in God's Thought. We have a right, then, to say that the analogy fits accurately.

We assume, then, a spiritual world, or rather we assume the reality of Duty, from which we necessarily infer, as I said, a spiritual world; and, when we find that the phenomena of the human conscience and spirit can be explained on that assumption, we return to our starting-point, and say: "That which we believed without proof is true. There is an imperative beyond our thought and independent of our consciousness, which we are bound to obey. The moment we will to obey it, we are conscious that it must have results, and, on further thought, that these results can only be fully realized in a world in which Will and Thought alone exist, and therefore in a spiritual, not a material world. And, granting these things, our will to do right, and a world in which Will and Thought alone exist, we are forced to infer One whose Will is absolutely good, and who contains in his Will our will, and in his self-active Reason

and Will, which are his personality, our personality; One therefore who is Eternal Life, and the life of all, the only pure Being, in whom all Being is. And, lastly, we are driven with joy to feel and know that, if Duty and a spiritual world and God be truths, Immortality must also be a Truth. If we are inseparably connected with the Infinite and Eternal Will, we must ourselves be, as derived from him, infinite and eternal.

And now, with this knowledge in our hand, we turn to our life, and find it falling into perfect order. We know whence we have come and whither we are going. We know the end of all our brother-men and the necessary end of all this struggle of Man. Problem after problem is solved, difficulty after difficulty vanishes away; and, if some things remain obscure, we know that we have but to wait, and our key will unlock them, when we are able to bear the revelation. Peace enters our heart, the peace which comes of certain knowledge. We know and rest in the infinite meaning of the Saviour's saying: "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him."

## IMMORTALITY.—IV.

1871.

“For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.”—LUKE XX., 38.

No ONE can help feeling, at this time of the year, a forecasting of decay. The melancholy skies, the naked trees, the heavy smell of rotting leaves, the hateful atmosphere, tell their own story. And influenced as we are through blood and bone by the elements which surround us, and by the memories of brighter weather, the spring of life relaxes, and our thoughts take the color of decay.

As it is year after year, is it so for man after man? Time goes on, but past years do not live again. The flower-life goes on, but not the same flowers. And does mankind go on, but not men? Have we each our spring, our summer, our rich and swiftly miserable autumn, our winter of death, and never another spring? This is the thought of many at this time. The race continues, but the individual perishes. Death is personal annihilation.

Last Sunday, we gave some reasons for the prevalence of this thought among natural philosophers: to-day, we begin by giving some reasons for its prevalence in other classes of society, and pass on to consider the reason-

ableness or not of annihilation ; meaning by annihilation not, of course, the destruction of the elements of which our body is composed, but the resolution into those elements of all that we call thought, feeling, will, and self-consciousness.

The reasons of the prevalence of this opinion vary with different types of men and their different lives. It arises in some from the intensity of youthful ardor, when it has been overstrained. They have been so full of life that they have drawn upon it too much, and drained the source dry. Weary, exhausted, yet still desirous to find the old enjoyment, they are tossed between desire and weakness to fulfil desire, till at last the only comfort seems to be to look forward to an eternal sleep. "Why should the vital torment of life be renewed?" they ask, forgetting that it is torment because life has been misused, not knowing that life is vital joy when it is used with temperance.

It arises in others, and these chiefly business men, from the disease of unceasing work. One of the things which is acting worst on English society is that a number of men have got into that state in which recreation is impossible. All the year round, from morning to night, they pursue their trade or their profession without a single break, except their heavy after-dinner sleep. Even in dreams, they hunt their work, like dogs. This is also a misuse of life. All joy is taken out of it, beauty has no place in its foggy realm: even love resolves itself into a dull desire to provide for one's children. The world is not their oyster which they open: they are the oysters of the world. And, when they are deaf and blind to all the loveliness and passion and movement of

life, what wonder if, having become machines, they do not care to run on forever?

It arises in the case of a number of cultivated young men from the depression of failure. Within the last ten years there has been in the universities an atmosphere, almost tropical, of refined culture and scholarship; and in it a number of intellects and imaginations have been forced, till they are, for the most part, unfitted to do the rough work of the world. Educated, then, up to the point at which they fully comprehend and passionately feel the great things which men possessing genius have done, it seems to them, by a very common instinct, that they can either do the same, or at least that they have a right to try. Hence, we have the deluge of second and third rate painters, poets, novelists, critics, and the rest, with which England is now overspread. They begin with hope and joy; and, after a little deserved applause for the passing pleasure they have given, mankind, whose judgment soon gets right, drops them, and they feel with bitterness that, though they have won something, it is not their ideal, and moreover that they can *never* reach their ideal. The applause does not deceive them: they are too well educated not to see, when the first excitement of production is over and they look at the work to which they have given their best powers, that they have failed. Disgust of life ensues, a kind of passionate hatred of themselves. In that atmosphere, no good work can be done; and, if they try again, the inspiration which they had abandons them, it was founded on ignorance of the extent of their powers, knowledge has dispersed it: the failure is worse than before. But all this sort of work has unfitted them for ruder and more practical work.

After riding on Pegasus, they cannot get into the traces and pull at the common chariot of the work of the world. They cease to act, they bury themselves in their learned and artistic leisure, and all vivid life is over. The bitterness of failure leads them to utter carelessness of a life to come. Why should they renew the web which will crack from side to side again? And the inaction in which they live takes away the desire to live again, for it takes away the food of life.

Moreover, among persons of this educated type, the same thing holds good, as in the case of the scientific man who pursues nothing else but science. Devotion to art or to criticism alone develops the faculties used to a strength out of all proportion to the rest. Not only are the spiritual powers dwindled to a thread for want of use, so that immortal life is a pretty dream, but the faculties used, being unbalanced by other important powers of our nature, are not capable of forming a just judgment. Criticism, in discussing matters such as the evidence for immortality, discusses it as it would the evidence for the existence of an early and unimportant myth. It begins by supposing it is not true; it leaves out all the spiritual phenomena which, in the history of the human heart, have accompanied faith in it; it treats a question which belongs, by the hypothesis, to the realm of intellect and the spirit, as if it were a question of the pure intellect alone. On the face of it, nothing can be more absurd,—as absurd as the late discussion into which one of our philosophers enters with regard to a mother's love for a child, on physiological grounds alone. It is plain in this case that the critical powers have become so abnormally developed as to vitiate the purity of judgment.

On the other hand, the mere æsthetic life tends equally to a belief in annihilation. A somewhat stern and energetic manliness is needed in the character of a highly educated man before he can look forward with joy to living for ever. Increase of knowledge and increased sensitiveness of feeling increase the pain of living; and, though they also increase its joy, yet we begin to fear joy, for we know the reaction which follows it. "Can we bear," we ask, "going on with this struggle forever?" Yes, we can; but only when we are possessed by the noblest and the strongest ideas, when we enter into the struggle as men who are resolved not to retreat a single step. Slowly, then, as we grow through long battle into veteran warriors, we feel, not the languid pleasure in beauty, but the glorious joy of the war for right; and to live forever becomes the first desire of life, for we know that it means life in union with eterna' Goodness, Truth, and Love.

This sort of manliness the exclusively æsthetic life does not cherish, but enfeebles. It produces a soft, rather mournful habit of mind: it unnerves the more active powers, it makes men shrink from the clash of life; its devotion to beauty, for beauty's sake alone, blurs the sharpness of the lines which divide right and wrong: everything which charms the senses, provided the charm be a delicate one, is lovely, and whether it is morally lovely or not is a secondary consideration. Pain, therefore, disease, strong effort, the struggle of doubt, the labor to find answers to great problems, such as this of immortality, become bitter and distressful; and in absolute seeking after and finding of the beautiful here, in exquisite enjoyment of it when found, and in



exquisite regret of it when it can be no more enjoyed, all hope, nay, all possibility of enjoying another life than the present, passes away, and life becomes in youth a passionate desire to get all the joy and beauty possible before old age comes, and in old age a wailing memory of past delight, and a sorrowful waiting in as much quiet as possible for the everlasting sleep. "Why enter another world? No other world can be lovelier than this; and, if I may not have this, I do not care for another."

The reasons why many working-men reject immortality, I have spoken of elsewhere; but there is one reason common to them and to many educated men. It is that we are living in a revolutionary period of thought, and the very fact that any opinion is an old one is enough to subject it to attack. Now, in the general revolt against things accredited by custom, not only is the orthodox faith involved, but also beliefs which, though included in Christianity, are older than it. Among these is the belief in immortality. We are doubting now the doctrine that the ancient Persian, Hindoo, and Hebrew clung to, that Cicero and Plato rejoiced in holding, that the Mahometan does not dream of denying. It seems as if on this subject the whole world were going back into the old savage, or into even a less noble condition; for I suppose no man in hours of sober judgment has any doubt as to the nobleness of the idea of immortality, and the degradation involved in the idea of annihilation. But the truth is that a vast deal of the denial of the former among the working-classes and among the young men and women of the upper classes is not owing to any thought being expended on the subject,

but simply to the revolutionary impulse in them. "The thing is old, let us get rid of it. The conservative feeling supports it: everything which conservatism supports we attack. Let us have something new." And it is not unamusing—if we put the religious feeling about it aside—to watch the self-conscious audacity with which people try to awake one's astonishment, and really awake one's pity, by airing in society their faith in annihilation, as if to believe in it were not intellectually and morally a miserable business.

One would despair of the progress of mankind, if one thought that this would last. But revolutionary periods end by finding a new channel for their waters; and, though the exhausted ideas of the past perish in the whirlpool, the noble ideas live and flow on with the new waters. We are now in a kind of backwater of the great river of Progress, and spinning round and round in a confusion of eddies and efforts to get on. When we have found our fresh thoughts and got them clear, we shall get out of the backwater with a rush, and stream on in that which I like better than revolution,—steady movement, aware of itself, to distinctly recognized ends. But at present every one is naturally dissatisfied with the want of purpose, of clear aims, of any coherent ideas in social, political, religious, and artistic life. And the dissatisfaction shows itself chiefly in all matters which belong to the realm of art; for in art one always finds the more subtle aspects of any society reflected. Our more modern poets and painters find nothing calm or perfect enough in modern life to represent. They go back out of the present to the past: they tell us stories and paint us scenes from the

old Greek and Mediæval life. They try to recover the dead motives of a dead life; and a whole school has sprung up, both in poetry and on canvas, which possesses much charm, but which is essentially mournful and retrograde, which smells of musk and ambergris, whose passion is more that of exhausted feeling trying by morbid means to sting itself into joy than the frank and healthy passion of youth, whose notes are not native to English soil, and whose work does not smack of the fresh air, nor seem done face to face with nature, but smells of scented rooms, lit up with artificial light.

Our art has been driven from the present to the past, and those who enjoy and love it naturally cease to feel interest in the future: the whole tone of feeling it encourages tends to lessen the care for and the belief in a life to come.

But this cannot last: the present is always too strong for the past; and art and philosophy and literature, and with them educated society, will emerge from this backwater, when modern life finds clear aims, and flow on in new channels. Active life in the present will then produce art and literature to represent it, and the interest in the present will make the future so interesting that the tendency to believe in immortality will take to itself fresh life. By that time, Christianity—I mean our present form of it, which is also in this revolutionary stage of confusion, changing old opinions for new—will also have refitted itself to the higher thoughts and wants of men; and its doctrine of immortality, freed from the low ideas with which it has been surrounded by a dying theology, present once more to men, longing again to live forever because they have found a vital present, a glorious ideal to which they can aspire with joy.

For, after all, what is at the root of this belief in annihilation? It is that our theology has been for some years presenting to us an idea of God wholly inadequate to our present intellectual and moral conceptions, and an idea of man which we now reject as ignoble, and as untrue because ignoble. Not that this idea of God was inadequate to past society, or that idea of man ignoble. They were then as high as most men could receive, though we always find a few who protested against them, and rose above the common level. But thought on these subjects is now up to that of the higher spirits of the past, and theology must rise to the moral and intellectual level of the present before immortality can be a universal faith again.

An adequate idea of God, a noble idea of man,—these are the ideas which, reintroduced into theology, will bring back the belief in immortality; for they will render the theory of annihilation intellectually as well as morally absurd.

The common notion of God divides his being from the universe and from mankind. It is so afraid of being called pantheistic that it forgets the truth which is in pantheism. If nature and mankind are, as a whole or in any of their parts, capable of being truly severed from God, so that the one runs along like a machine which may run down, or that in the other one soul can, by becoming eternally evil, be eternally divided from the Godhead, then God cannot be considered absolute nor all-comprehending nor all-powerful for good. There are points at which his power fails, his goodness retires from the field,—points at which he is forced to struggle; and the possibility of inferring these things

from the orthodox idea of God is surely inconsistent with the idea of him which we feel *now* that we ought to possess. It is really less than we can conceive, and for us to worship it any longer is idolatry. We must have an adequate idea of God; and, till we get it into theology, a great number of men who think deeply will be atheists, and necessarily disbelievers in immortality.

Again, owing to this unenlivened notion of a God who sits apart, at a distance from us, we are forced to assume another great power in the universe. If any one of us, or anything, can have or retain being, apart from him, then there must be another source of being than his. And, practically speaking, that is what is held. The artist talks of nature, the philosopher of law, the theologian of the devil; and we have a dual government of the world, in which God tends to become more and more a remote and misty phantom.

Now, I say, if we believe in a God at all, that the only adequate conception of him which will satisfy our intellect and heart alike is one which conceives of him as the sole self-existing Being and of everything and everyone as having Being only in his Being. The life of the universe, of matter and spirit, is *one life*,—the Life of God infinitely conditioned in and through a myriad forms. There is not a shred of the world called the world of nature which is not held in him, and is not, indeed, his thought. We all *are*, only because we are in him and part of his being, our personality held in his personality. Do not call this pantheism. It may be pantheism, but it is something more than pantheism. It is not saying the universe is God: it is saying God is the universe, and something more than the universe. It is the doctrine

which Saint Paul inferred from the old Greek poet: "In him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." It is the doctrine of Saint Paul himself: "Of him and by him and through him are all things"; and the moment we fully conceive that he alone *is*, and that nothing is which is not he, it becomes intellectually absurd that any soul should go out as a candle. Once having been, once having had consciousness, once having had personality, it is impossible to lose being, consciousness, and personality. That which is in God, in eternal Being, cannot perish.

But it is *not* intellectually absurd when God's existence is denied, and to this conclusion men come who think of what they mean by annihilation. They know that the denial of immortality irresistibly infers atheism; that, if there is Eternal Being, those who have issued from that Being and have their being in him must be immortal: we cannot think the one without thinking the other. And I want those who so lightly talk of man dying forever to clearly understand either that they are talking nonsense, if they confess a God, or that they are logically driven into atheism.

For not only is the notion of annihilation of personality—that is, of our consciousness, will, and character—intellectually absurd in face of an adequate intellectual conception of God, it is also morally absurd in face of an adequate moral conception of God.

But the fact is that it is not morally absurd to many of us, because we have no adequate moral conception of God. The moral inadequacy of our thought of God is chiefly in this, that we accept a teaching which thinks

of him as having no duties to his children. We are told that he has a Sovereign's right to do what he likes with us, and that we have no business to judge as to the right and wrong of his actions.

I deny that at once on the ground already laid down, that our being is held in God's being, and therefore that what is truth and justice and love to us is the same in kind in us as in God, and that it is absurd to think otherwise. But, as these teachers do think otherwise, they go on to infer that things which would seem unjust if done by a man are not unjust if done by God. We are told that he creates us to damn us, or leaves us alone to ruin ourselves, or that he allows us to be children of the devil, things so absolutely immoral in an earthly father that we are driven either into a state of blind submission in which intellect is destroyed and the moral sense utterly confused, or into absolute revolt, or into a kind of hopeless drifting carelessness of the whole matter. And in the last state of mind are those who still cling by old custom to belief in God and immortality, but who have no real pleasure or interest in their belief in whom it produces no result.

Now, such a want of vital faith is due to a mean conception of their own moral nature following on a mean conception of God's moral nature. "He has left me to myself," they say; "nay, more, I am told that I am vile and worthless spiritually, that my nature is utterly corrupt. If I am so bad," they go on, "why should I care what becomes of me? If my nature is corrupt throughout, what is the use of aspiring to be better? Nay, I do not believe in my aspirations: am I not told that they themselves are wicked?" This is the way they have

argued long ago. Now they have ceased to trouble themselves about the matter; but the result of the argument remains as an unconscious influence below the surface of their life, and the effect is a total loss of interest in immortality, amounting to practical disbelief of it.

All this is done away with by a true moral conception of God in his relation to us, based on the moral ideas which we possess ourselves from him. He has sent us forth from himself: therefore, he is bound to be, we feel, in the highest conceivable sense, a Father to us, and he is our Father. We can never, then, be separated from him, never let alone by him, never shut up by him in eternal evil. Our Being has come direct from his, and is now in his Being: therefore, our nature can never be utterly vile. Our aspirations are his voice in us: our justice, truth, and love, such as they are, are still the same in kind as his.

He is pure moral being: therefore, since we cannot divide ourselves from him, and since he is bound as a Father to educate us, we must reach in the end pure moral being.

It is thus that from an adequate moral conception of God we arrive at the second thing I said we wanted to restore to us the belief in immortality,—an adequate conception of man. We are inseparably united to pure intellectual and moral Being, and in that union we are great, and do great things of the brain and of the spirit.

And now, in conclusion, taking both of these things together, the greatness of man in God and the absolute morality of God, which we now know is in kind the same as ours, let us see if annihilation be not morally absurd, if the being of God be granted.



Of course I shall speak in what follows of good men, and it will be said that the argument does not prove that the wicked will not be annihilated. But I have already spoken of this question in previous sermons, and I hold that the destruction of the wicked is morally and logically impossible, if there be a God who is the only self-existing Being, and if he be a moral Being. It is a question of redemption beyond this earth, but the present argument deals with the question as it lies before us in this world.

No one can deny, who is not prejudiced by the low theological view of our nature, that it is capable of greatness of character. In every age there have been men who have forgotten self for the sake of right and truth and for a noble cause, even though the self-forgetfulness meant death,—men whose glory shines with the serene light of stars in the sky which arches over history. Others, too, have been, whose path has lain apart from fame, the quiet martyrs of self-surrender, who have died to the joys of life for the sake of others' joy, or borne in the eloquent silence of resignation bitter pain and grief.

And has all that perished for them? Has the noble effort and the faithful life been in vain for those who lived it? Are they only to live in our memory and love, but they themselves "to be blown about the desert dust, or sealed within the iron hills"? It revolts all our moral feeling, if we believe in a moral God. Either there is no God, whose children we are, or the denial of immortality is absurd. There is nothing between atheism and immortality.

And that infinite thirst of knowledge we possess, that

power of thought which sweeps us beyond the world of sense and time; that inexhaustible activity of imagination by which we create new worlds; our passionate cry for the rest which lies in harmony of nature; our desire for fuller life, when life is filled with great thoughts and pure and passionate love of man; that yearning of the spirit for freedom from sin and for union with truth; that ceaseless cry for more light; our delight in reverencing something better than ourselves, in ideal excellence; our intense sensibility to beauty and sublimity in nature,—have these no final cause, if God exists? Did he give us these powers of intellect and heart and spirit,—powers which draw their fire from the fire of his eternal Thought and Will,—only to resume them into himself, to lure us on to work and then to quench our light; to make our hopes our hell, our noblest longings our deepest misery; to extinguish our exhaustless effort and curiosity in the degradation of an eternal sleep? Did he give us that love of the ideal, that delight in beauty, that tearful interest in his universe, only to make the grave and the wretched dust of our corruption the vain and miserable end? Has he written his scorn on all our aspirations after truth and light and holiness? Does he smile with contemptuous pity when men's hearts go up to him in praise for the freshness and radiance of the spring? It is incredible. Either the atheist is right, or that immortality is untrue is absurd.

Look, too, at our triumph over death. When decay usurps the powers, and memory and life slip from us like a dream, it is then that our inner being most often rises into beauty and victory. And, when the last act

of the man is the assertion of his immortality, does the Lord of Righteousness contradict him in contempt? Is the spirit on the verge of its greatest loss at its very noblest moment of gain? Does it reach with faithful effort, and thrill with divine hope, the mountain peak, only to topple over the precipice of annihilation? Then those who believe in God are the real fools of the world.

Our soul swells with reverence and love for those who held life as nothing in comparison with truthfulness to right; our soul is full of a sad condemnation of those who prefer to live when life is infamous; and yet, if annihilation be true, God despises the nobility which we revere, and tacitly approves the infamy which we condemn. But this is incredible, if we conceive of God as moral: it is hideous. Either, then, there is no God, or annihilation is false.

Finally, it is true of a noble human life that it finds its highest enjoyment in the consciousness of progress. Our times of greatest pleasure are when we have won some higher peak of difficulty, trodden under foot some evil, refused some pleasant temptation for truth's sake, been swept out of our narrow self by love, and felt day by day, in such high labors, so sure a growth of moral strength within us that we cannot conceive of an end of growth.

And, when all that is most vigorous within us, does God,—pure, moral Being,—does God say No? Is that insatiable delight in progress given to the insect of an hour? Does there seem to be a Spirit who leads us through life, conquering the years in us, redeeming us from all evil, bringing in us calm out of sorrow, faith

out of doubt, strength out of trial? And, when he has made us great of spirit like himself, does he bury all that wealth of heart in nothingness?

What incredible thing is this? Only credible if there be no God.

LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION OF  
BEDFORD CHAPEL.

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“SALT WITHOUT SAVOR.”



## LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION OF BEDFORD CHAPEL.

TO THE CONGREGATION OF BEDFORD CHAPEL, BLOOMSBURY:

It is only after serious and long consideration that I have come to the resolution of which I now inform my congregation. I have decided that it is my duty to leave the Church of England, and I have already placed the resignation of my license in the hands of the Bishop of London. When, some years ago, Bedford Chapel was presented to me, the theological opinions I held were legally tenable in the Church of England, but they were not in accordance with its orthodox scheme of doctrine. I made use of the liberty the law afforded me, and claimed the compromise which the Church, desirous to expand its circle, offers so freely to its members. Nevertheless, I felt even then that my opinions might settle into some form which the large liberty of the Church could not tolerate; and I accepted the gift of the chapel on the expressed condition that I should not be prevented from stating opinions which might hazard my position in the Church of England. That time has now arrived. As long as I had any doubt as to the incredibility of miracles, I could justly remain a minister of the Church. I was also bound by a multitude of con-

siderations not to act on impulse or in a hurry. The matter was too grave for haste, but it was also too grave to lay aside. I considered it for four years, but at last to consider it any longer meant to wilfully blind myself to the truth for the sake of my position. Therefore, some Sundays ago, in a series of sermons on Miracles and on Authority, I expressed the conclusions at which I had arrived. These conclusions, being equivalent to an assertion of the incredibility of miracle, and to a denial of the exclusive authority of the Church or of the Bible, compel me to say that I cannot any longer, with truth to myself or loyalty to the Church, remain its minister. The form of doctrine to which the Church of England has committed itself appears to stand on the Miracle of the Incarnation as a building on its foundation. Not to accept that miracle is to separate myself, not, I hope, from the spirit, but from the external form of the faith as laid down by the Church of England; and it is the inability to confess this miracle which, beyond all else, forces me out of its communion. But, though I depart on this ground, the rejection of the miraculous leaves all the great spiritual truths I have been accustomed to teach untouched by any doubt of mine. They are now, in my belief, more clear than before, more useful for men's inspiration and comfort. They are freed, as it seems to me, from errors which may have once been their strength, but which are now their weakness. I rejoice that I can now leave on one side these supports of truth, and teach the truth itself alone. There will be, therefore, no more change in my preaching than that which will naturally follow on the greater sense of freedom that it will possess. Nor do I leave the Church to



become a mere Theist. I believe, though the Person of Christ is no longer miraculous to me, though I cannot consider him as absolute God, yet that God has specially revealed himself through Christ, that the highest religion of mankind is founded on his life and revelation, that the spirit of his life is the life and salvation of men, and that he himself is the Head and Representative of Mankind,—Jesus Christ our Lord. Since that is the case, and since I wish to sever myself as little as possible from a long and noble tradition of religion, and from the early associations of a great communion, the English Church Service, with some omissions, will be still read in Bedford Chapel. The chief of those omissions will naturally be the creeds. They exact agreement with their clauses from those who recite them. It is different with the prayers and Christian hymns contained in the service. They are subject to the selection of the worshippers; and no one while I read them will now impute to me doctrines which I do not hold, or mistake my position. I can use them as the best vehicles of religious emotion which we possess, without being supposed to agree with all the theological views of their writers. It is not without a natural regret that I part from a communion in which I have served for more than twenty years, and from those old and dear associations which have been with me from my boyhood. And I must also feel some sadness for the loss of many who will leave my congregation and listen to me no more. But the time has come when, at any cost, I must say farewell, and look forward to a new and untried life, in which I pray I shall have the help and blessing of God. But, when I look forward, I cannot regret the parting. I am glad to be freed from

compromise, glad to be able to speak unfettered by a system, glad to have a clear position, glad to pass out of an atmosphere which had become impossible to breathe, because I was supposed, however I might assert the contrary, to believe all the doctrines of the Church of England in the way the Church confessed them.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

1 MANCHESTER SQUARE, LONDON, Sept. 15, 1880.

## SALT WITHOUT SAVOR.

OCTOBER 17, 1880.

“Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith will ye season it?” — MARK ix., 50.

SINCE I last met you, I have taken a step which changes many things, both for you who have listened to me for so long and for myself. I have left the Church of England, and this chapel has entered upon a new life. It is with mingled seriousness and joy that I have departed. Indeed, there can be few hours more grave in a man's life than that in which, late in his career and no longer young, he leaves the home that has sheltered him for so many years, with all its associations and traditions, and sets sail an emigrant to a new land, to till it and to keep it. I have spoken in this personal way, because I wish my congregation to understand and feel as deeply as they can do for me how serious is the step that I have made, and how seriously I have taken it; and I ask them to believe that I have not rashly done this thing, that I have counted the cost of it, and that I mean with God's help to work it out, and I have asked for his help in my future life, which is the power of the soul and the inspiration of labor. I have made these personal allusions, because I want you to feel and think as seriously of the

duty I owe to those of you who may choose to remain with me or to come to me as I think of the step I have taken. I was bound not to make such a change, unless I clearly knew in matters of religious thinking and of religious life where I was and what I meant, and unless I stated with all the clearness I could muster why I have changed my place, and what I thought of those great religious truths to which I cling with all my heart and soul and intellect. It will be necessary, then, for some Sundays that I should speak on these truths, in order that you may know my views, and may either leave or stay with me. I am glad to be free from a position of compromise: I am now able to express my views with absolute freedom; but, on this day when I begin my work, I am forced, somewhat against my will, to make a personal explanation, and to speak this morning of some reasons I have for leaving the Church, and this evening of the reasons I have for making those changes in the service which you have already observed in the paper which I sent to my congregation, and which many of those who belong to my congregation have seen elsewhere. I said that the main reason for my departure from the Church was that I had ceased to believe that miracles were credible; and that, since the English Church founds its whole scheme of doctrine on the Miracle of the Incarnation, disbelief in that miracle put me outside of the doctrine of the Church. That was the crowning cause of my action; and I shall explain it more fully when I come hereafter to speak of the incarnation, and necessarily of the personality of Christ. It was enough to state that reason alone in a letter which was bound to be short, and in which I naturally chose to

put forward the most prominent cause of action. Moreover, to set aside the doctrine of the Miraculous Incarnation, was to set myself apart, as I wished to do, from the whole scheme of doctrine put forth with respect to God and man by the High and Low Church parties in the Church. The reason I gave then was quite full enough in itself to explain my secession; but behind that there were other reasons which I am now bound to lay before you, and which will more fully explain what I have done and where I stand. I left the Church, not only from disagreement with its doctrines, but because I had come to disapprove of the very existence of it as an ecclesiastical body, especially of it as connected with the State, and also of its existence in relation to politics, theology, and religion.

In all I am now going to say, I must not be understood to say one word against the men or those who belong to the Church, nor indeed against the noble working of the Church itself. I shall speak simply and clearly of the theory on which the Church exists, and which I felt it impossible for me to live up to or to retain. Politically, the theory is mixed up with the old aristocratic system which has perished or is perishing so rapidly, the very essence of which is in opposition, as I think, to all the moving and living forms of society. The theory of the Church is an aristocratic theory, and it has ministered to that imperialistic conception of God which in theology has done as much harm as despotism or caste system of any kind has done to society. The way the Church works in society proves what I contend. It has systematized exclusion and supported caste in religion. It has forced the whole body of the Dissenters from its forms

to suffer under a religious and social stigma, which is scarcely now beginning to be removed. It claims to separate from itself and strives to keep down large masses of men whose spiritual life is as deep as its own; nor does the Church recognize their religious movements as upon a level with its own movements. The standard of worthiness, then, in the theory of the Church, not of course in Churchmen, is not spiritual goodness, but union with itself. This is not the fault of its members, but the fault of its theory; but the fault condemns the theory. Many within the Church have tried hard to do what was right in the matter, to hold out the hand of union to our Nonconformists; but every effort has failed, and every effort will fail. The theory of the Church is too strong for these men. I could no longer be mixed up with a body whose very political principles I hold in condemnation, and the very existence of which, in spite of all the liberal men in it, supports the political principles and systems which I oppose and shall oppose as long as I have breath to speak.

Secondly. Ecclesiastically, the Church supports and claims an outward authority for the faith of man. Its system is based on the authority of a creed which embodies and crystallizes past religious thought, and makes it still more rigid in articles; or upon the infallible authority of the Bible, or upon the infallible authority of the Divine Spirit secluded and confined within the limits of the Church itself. On whichever of these forms of authority Churchmen base themselves, the Church, by their voice, calls upon all men to unite themselves to her, to bend before these authorities or to lose or imperil their salvation. It asks them, practically speaking, to

surrender a great part of their individuality, and to become one consenting part of the whole. The Bible has spoken, the Church has pronounced its decree, it is the part of the laity only to believe and to obey. The inevitable tendency of this system and its claims is to make both preacher and hearer the conventional servants, not of a living word, but of a literal system, bones in a skeleton, not members of a living body, slaves either of a hierarchy or of a book; functionaries and listeners who do not know what belongs to them, who cannot move except in chains, and none the less chains for their ponderous covering. Authority of this kind, faithfully followed and faithfully believed in, disarticulates, I do believe, in the end, the backbone of the intellect and of the spirit, and hangs lead upon the wings of the religious imagination, binds the soul away from spiritual freedom into the prison of the past, frequently reduces the conscience to silence, and still more frequently sacrifices the reason upon the altar of ecclesiastical theology. But these powers, which it is the inevitable tendency of authority to weaken and finally to paralyze, powers of the reason, conscience, and spirit, are the very and only powers which God has given to us, whereby we can see his truth and recognize his word and grasp to our hearts the new treasure of revelation, which it is his special work to declare as the world advances. Authority not only tends to enfeeble the power of the soul, but in enfeebling these powers destroys the very conditions in mankind by which the word of God is heard and understood. This is its inevitable tendency, and though there are numbers in the Church who claim their liberty from these authorities, and maintain their individual freedom,

and hold their reason, conscience, and spirit largely free, the tendency in the end becomes too much for them, or their position becomes untenable. They cannot liberalize wholly a Church based upon authority, and to take away these authorities from the Church, as many of them wish to do, will not liberalize it, but will do away with it altogether. It is nothing without its system, and its system is authoritative. How, then, when I came to feel thus strongly and to express it as I did a few months ago, could I remain bound up with a body which still rested upon authority; how could I live any longer in the Church?

Again, on the question of the greatest of all religious conceptions,—the idea of a universal Church,—I felt that the theory of the Church was not only inadequate, but contradictory. The theory of the Church excludes from its fold all who do not agree with it, all who will not either confess its creeds or acknowledge the supremacy of the Bible as infallible, or bend to its spiritual decrees. And the Church is not alone in this. Almost all sects that differ from it have also their exclusive confessions, and many are more exclusive than the Church itself. Now, this exclusiveness and its fruits seemed to me to be at the root of nearly half the evils which had connected themselves with religion. In the past, it made intolerance and persecution a Christian duty: in the present, it is a source of daily violation of Christian love, both in public and private. It guaranteed exclusiveness as a religious necessity, promoted Pharisaism, and by calling those who did not agree with the Church or with a Confession infidels or heretics made them infidels and kept them heretics. This theory, too, denied, in my mind,



the mighty conception which Christ gave to the world of a universal fatherhood in God, and of a universal brotherhood among men, of God incarnate in all men, of the eternal and necessary bond that binds God to every single soul; of a universal Church which embraces all the race which now exists, in ideal, but which will be completed in fact in the future. These vast and glorious ideas, which, taken together, form the most magnificent conception of Christendom, are suppressed and stifled by the theory of the Church, and by the exclusiveness of sects which bind up themselves within the limits of confessions. Churches and sects talk of the Church of God and of the world, as if they were two distinct things, not only in fact, but absolutely in idea,—as if there were a final and necessary separation between the two. The true view is, I believe, that the world and all mankind is the Church of God, and all men in idea are redeemed, but not as yet saved; that the idea will be realized in full at last, and humanity, one and all, made the absolute Son of God. This idea is lost, nay, is contradicted by the theory of the Church, not, indeed, by all who belong to the Church, but by the very theory on which it exists. But it is the idea which of all is the most deeply rooted and most ardent and most enkindling in my faith. Therefore, when I came to see that it was not compatible with the Church, or with joining any sect which demanded assent to creeds or confessions as necessary to salvation, I could neither stay in the Church nor join a sect.

Lastly, I found no rest finally for my foot among any of the parties in the Church, and, least of all, among the liberal Church party. Two clear schemes of doctrine

existed in the Church some years ago, and were broadly characterized as High Church and Low Church. Both of these schemes have lived for centuries, and they are logical within themselves, and being, indeed, the outcome of two parts of human nature, had and still possess tremendous power over the minds of men. Both are opposed to each other, radically opposed; and many years ago, when a new religious fervor began to stir in the Church, these two schemes of doctrine, being excited through that fervor, began to clash, and finally clashed in a great trial, so that a split seemed inevitable, and one or other of the parties seemed impelled to leave the Church. It was then that the law, to whose sentence the matter was referred, affirmed that both these parties, so opposite, could justly and conscientiously exist within the Church. And, when that was so found, then the old notion of a comprehensive Church, which might represent all phases of belief in the nation, began to take a new consistency in men; and this notion of making the Church comprehensive soon extended itself. To many persons, among whom I found myself, both these theological schools of which I speak were abhorrent, and these persons, of whom, as I said, I became one, caught at the idea of widening the Church, and, when the compromise afforded in the case of the Gorham Judgment gave them hope, formed a fresh party in the Church, and strove to naturalize within its limits a liberal theology. "The Church was a Church of compromise," they said; "and everything the law allowed them to say they would say." In that way, by introducing liberal views into the Church, they tried to make these views slowly at home within its fold. The Church, they believed, finding

these views at home within it, would naturally expand, open its arms wider, and lessen the severity of its tenets. And, indeed, that has been done. It was a tenable position, upon the ground that the law, which only takes notice of the agreement of words, was the Judge of theology; and it was further tenable so long as the public understood and recognized that position. But when the theory of that party should come to be pushed too far, and come into contact with vital and pressing questions, it was certain to break down. There comes a time when compromise is incomprehensible, and that time has come now. Compromise has done its work, it has expanded the Church, it has modified its tests. It has made the whole tone of the Church more tolerant, while the power of the Church as a religious body has increased, and justly and nobly increased, owing to the theory of the liberal party within the Church. But you cannot strain even an elastic body beyond a certain point; and if it should come to be said—and there are some symptoms of such a thing—that the liberal clergy in the Church may say anything, may deny the miracles and the divinity, not to say the Godhead of Christ, may abandon the Incarnation and the Resurrection as miracles and utterly deny the authority of the Church and of the Bible and yet cling to the Church, then they will find that the strain will be too great for themselves, for their congregations, for the endurance of the Church and for the sympathy and belief of the laity.

It will be better then for the great cause of religious life in the nation that these persons who may come to push compromise so far should understand and frankly accept the fact that compromise has already reached its

limits, and either revert to the position occupied a few years ago (and which is now occupied by the greater number of them with a clear conscience) or choose a position outside the Church. That was my personal opinion; and I only express it now in self-defence, and not in attacking others. I was convinced that the whole of religion was suffering from the state of compromise,—not the religion of persons who are already religious, but the chances of religion in the great masses of men who had been affected by unbelief in God or unbelief in Christianity. The High Church and the Low Church do not compromise at all: they deliberately oppose those who deny miracles, and those who support the doctrine of the Broad Church. Every one understands their position. But the liberal party in the Church, not opposing those who deny the miracles or attack doctrines, compromise the matter by putting aside the question, speaking of Christianity as a beautiful moral system which is not really founded upon miracles or upon dogmas, but lives in the life of the heart. But the question cannot be put aside, and the method of the liberal party in the Church cannot be pushed further with advantage to the religious life of the nation. To say nothing about miracles when the question is leaping into the mind of every one, to say simply that Christianity does not rest upon them, is to act as men say the ostrich acts. There is the question vivid, full-grown, shouting like Achilles in the trench; and the Trojans smiling within the walls, and saying that it is not a question at all.

And the other questions, too, which press for solution, owing to the vast changes which science has wrought in the views of history and the physical world, are too vital,

too close to the homes and hearts and brains of men for a farther compromise: they involve the very heart of religion; and men who love religion and believe in Christianity as the saving power of the race, and yet who do not see how they can without self-inflicted blindness deny that the results of science and criticism have changed the whole aspect of religious questions, have no business to ignore by silence or to pass by only with allusions these questions, in order that they may by their inaction widen the Church. They will not widen it, and the very life of religion is in danger among the masses of the people. It is no time to think only of a side issue, and to try it. It was because I was convinced of the harm being done by this mode of action to religious life among the people that I resolved to give up that action for another, and can only try it outside the Church; for the moment I proclaimed my unbelief in miracles — for example, in the Miracle of the Incarnation — I could not remain in the Church, even were I allowed to remain, and hope to do any good. Every one would accuse me of dishonesty. Now it is different. Now I know that I shall be able to declare that, while I frankly accept the proved conclusions of science and criticism, there remain yet to me untouched and clear the great spiritual truths of the soul, the eternal revelation of God, the deep life of Christianity. I am free, and I am heartily glad of it. I make no sacrifice. I have followed with joy and gladness my own convictions, and look forward with ardor and with emotion to preaching the great truths that declare the divine relations of God and man. I shall speak of God abiding in nature and abiding in man, of God immanent in history and filling and impelling, day by day, the race

of man to a glorious and a righteous end: of the revelation he is daily giving of himself to man and of the inspiration which he pours into us all; of God as revealed in the highest way through Jesus Christ, my master; of the life which Christ has disclosed in his own life, as the true life of mankind; of the power and love by which God through him kindles and supports that love; of man reconciled to God through Christ, and reconciled to his brother man; of God incarnate in all men in the same manner, though not in the same degree as he was incarnate in Christ; of the vast spiritual communion in which all men are contained, and the depth of the immortality in which they now live and the fulfilment of which is their destiny; of the personal life of God in the soul and of his universal life in the race, and of a thousand results which in human history and human life flow in practice from the vivid existence of these mighty truths in man. Can I, then, be sorrowful as I look forward, or look back with any dim regret? Perfect freedom in these truths ought to kindle and to inspire. Oh! pray that I may always keep their ardor within me, and that in humility I may strive to be worthy of them and teach them, that the Father of light and of life may be with me, and that humbly and faithfully I may serve God, my Father, walking in the footsteps of my master, Jesus Christ.

## INSTITUTE ESSAYS :

READ BEFORE THE "MINISTERS' INSTITUTE," PROVIDENCE, R.I., OCTOBER, 1879.

### CONTENTS :

INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	Rev. H. W. BELLOWS.
FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST, . . . . .	Rev. S. R. CALTHROP.
THE RELATION OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY TO LIBERALISM, . . . . .	Prof. C. C. EVERETT.
INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHY UPON CHRISTIANITY, . . . . .	F. E. ABBOT.
MONOTHEISM AND THE JEWS, . . . . .	DR. GUSTAV GOTTHEIL.
THE IDEA OF GOD, . . . . .	Rev. J. W. CHADWICK.
THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL, . . . . .	Prof. EZRA ABBOT.
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, . . . . .	Rev. FRANCIS TIFFANY.
METHODS OF DEALING WITH SOCIAL QUESTIONS, . . . . .	Rev. J. B. HARRISON.
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